

CALL FOR PAPERS

A three-day conference, 9 - 11 September 2013

Accidents and Emergencies: Risk, Welfare and Safety in Europe and North America, c. 1750-2000

Keynote speakers

Professor Bill Luckin (University of Bolton, UK)
Dr Arwen Mohun (University of Delaware, USA)



Context and aims

We live in a society obsessed with risk and safety. Via a medley of state-related and commercial agencies, we insure ourselves against the possibility of death, ill-health, accident, theft and unemployment, subjecting every facet of our lives to the calculus of risk. Meanwhile, a battery of signs, leaflets, manuals and adverts spread the message of 'health and safety', reminding us of the dangers lurking in our everyday actions.

Equally, notions of risk and safety go to the heart of our sense of collective welfare, and the complex relations of self, society and the State, and public and private agency. Indeed, for some sociologists, we live in a 'risk society', premised on the 'reflexive' processing of information, the prevention of the accidental and the unexpected, and the anxious desire to predict – even control – the future.

The aim of this conference is to take stock of the present by focussing on modern Europe and North America from roughly 1750 onwards. It welcomes:

- historians from all sub-fields (social, medical, cultural, etc.)
- scholars from other disciplines such as sociology and cultural studies.

Risk, welfare and safety have long been sites of historical inquiry. This conference takes this literature as its point of departure, and encourages both general and trans-national appraisals of the history and nature of modern 'risk societies', as well as accounts which focus on particular technologies, practices and discourses.

In sum, the aim of 'Accidents and Emergencies' is to:

- rethink the history of risk, welfare and safety;
- encourage a more integrated approach to their empirical study and conceptualisation;
- open up new historical and sociological perspectives through which we might better grasp the present.

Format and themes

This will be a three-day conference: 9, 10 & 11 September 2013, to be held at Oxford Brookes University and supported by the University of Portsmouth.

We intend that the papers should be pre-circulated, in a draft form of around 5,000 words (though we appreciate this will not be possible in all cases).

Papers – conceptual and empirical – are invited which address one or more of the following themes:

1. Conceptualising and historicising 'risk society': the work of Beck, Giddens, Luhmann and Ewald – and others
2. The politics of risk and solidarity: liberalism, social democracy and neo-liberalism
3. Selling risk and safety: mixed economies of welfare, and the insurance and safety industries
4. Statistics, temporality and the calculus of risk: histories of actuarial probability
5. Industrial risks (i): pollution and the environment
6. Industrial risks (ii): technology and workplace accidents
7. Shock, trauma and sensation: representing accidents and emergencies
8. Logistics of risk and safety: emergency services and technologies
9. Preventing accidents (i): surveillance, inspection and maintenance
10. Preventing accidents (ii): health and safety education
11. Transnational risks and exchanges: policies, innovations and institutions
12. Key words: meanings of 'safety', 'risk', 'probability' and 'accident' in particular contexts

Over the three days we would like speakers to raise the salient issues of their papers in order to leave as much time as possible for discussion and feedback.

We intend to publish a selection of the papers in the form of an edited volume or special issue of a journal.

Contacts

Expressions of interest to: mike.esbester@port.ac.uk.

These should include:

- a brief 'bio' (detailing institution, publications, research interests, etc.)
- a proposal/abstract (of roughly 300 words), indicating the theme or themes for which you wish to be considered.

The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **31 January 2013**.

Alternatively, if you are interested in attending as a delegate please email to reserve a place.

Conference organisation enquiries: tcrook@brookes.ac.uk

Organisers: Dr Tom Crook (Oxford Brookes University) and Dr Mike Esbester (University of Portsmouth).