



College of Business
and Public Policy
UNIVERSITY of ALASKA ANCHORAGE

Accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business International

The CBPP Economics Department
invite you to attend the following

Faculty & Student Seminar

Thursday, October 5, 2017

3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m., RH303



David Finnoff

Associate Professor
University of Wyoming

Catastrophic Risk: Waking Up to the Reality of a Pandemic?

Abstract: Will a major shock awaken US citizens to the threat of catastrophic pandemic risk? We present evidence that suggests the answer might be “no”. Using a unique survey administered both before and after the 2014 West African Ebola Outbreak, we asked US citizens to value fatalities from pandemic risks compared to deaths from environmental disaster risks (e.g., Bhopal, Exxon, Deepwater, Fukushima) and or a terrorist attack (e.g., 9/11) (1). Our results show that prior to the Ebola scare, people were relatively complacent and placed a low relative priority on public spending to prepare for a pandemic disease outbreak. After the Ebola scare, US citizens did not over-react to the risk. This flat reaction to risk was unexpected and in contrast to the availability heuristic, the average citizen continued to value pandemic risk less relative to terrorism or environmental risk. This revealed compliancy matters for policy because while pandemic risks are increasing, the attentiveness of the US public is not—even after a significant shock.