Panel Proposal
Conference on Gambling and Risk Taking, 27-30, 2019

Panel Title
Gambling and the American Dream

Organizer and Presider
Dmitri Shalin, UBLV enter for Democratic Culture

Presenters and Paper Titles

Responsible Gambling and the Rationalization of Risk Taking in America
Andrea Dassopoulou, Department of Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

The Rhetoric and Logic of Risk in Religion: Las Vegas Experience
Josiah Kidwell, Department of Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Traveling to Risk: Crosscultural Perspectives on Thrillertainment in Tourism
Marta Soligo, Department of Sociology, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Gaming, Gambling, and Getting Ahead in American Society
Dmitri Shalin, UNLV Center for Democratic Culture

Abstracts

Andrea Dassopoulou
A Global expansion of gambling increases the prevalence of gambling addictions and other gambling related social problems. As these risks have increased, so have demands for better care of problem gamblers and limiting risks to the public. This paper examines responsible gambling campaigns in the U.S. as an attempt to ease anxieties about gambling, with special reference to theories of the risk society and rationalization.

Josiah Kidwell
This paper will explore how religious perspectives shape risk behavior throughout society, and how the logic of risk-taking influence religious groups and theologies. The paper is based on research in Las Vegas mega churches and internet savvy religious institutions.

Marta Soligo
Increasingly, tourists travel to experience adrenaline-based adventures that range from theme parks rides to gambling. This paper analyzes this phenomenon borrowing from Stuart Moss’s notion of Thrillertainment, which is the idea of being scared and/or thrilled while being entertained.

Dmitri Shalin
This paper explores a continuum of gaming, gambling, and risk taking in society at large as crucial for understanding the American dream. The distinction is made between gaming as a challenge enjoyed for its own sake, gambling as betting a value on a chancy outcome, and calculated risk taking as a means of getting ahead in life’s journey. The argument is made that everyday life is full of practical gambles which expose risk takers to setbacks and opportunities and which impact our life chances. The question is raised how the unequal distribution of life chances in American society affects the agent’s willingness and ability to take a gamble.