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Quarterly Newsletter

THE CENTRE FOR LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING IN RISK

Newsletter January 2019

The Focus of this Newsletter is on A Theory of Interpretation (Hermeneutics)

CLLR Studies for 2019

If you are thinking of doing studies in SPoR in 2019 then now is your time to register:
<https://cllr.com.au/register-to-study/>

Over 300 people studied with CLLR in 2018 across Australia, North America, New Zealand and Europe.

More than 50 people graduated with Certificates, Diplomas and 8 people became Masters of SPoR in 2018, giving them access to all Intellectual Property in SPoR for use in their work.



ONLINE STUDIES

- If you are not in Australia you can study online here: <https://cllr.com.au/online-courses-overseas-students/>
- You can download a prospectus here: <https://cllr.com.au/register-to-study/cllr-prospectus/>
- You can view testimonies from past students here: <https://vimeo.com/186359451>
- Studies can also be undertaken in-house eg. Introductory four modules (Certificate in SPoR) for a safety/risk/leadership team. In-house studies are offered at discount rates.
- You can view examples of CLLR work here: <https://vimeo.com/cllr>
- The focus of CLLR is on leadership, risk, culture and learning in the Social Psychology of Risk (<https://spor.com.au/>).

A discount is available for those who register for 4 modules.

In a few years Dr Long will be entering retirement and so many studies have now been shifted to Canberra where CLLR has its own designated Education Centre.

Semester One Schedule of Studies



Introduction to the Social Psychology of Risk

Module One

Dates

13,14 February 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

<https://cllr.com.au/product/an-introduction-to-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-1/>

SEEK Investigations

Module Two

Dates

6,7 March 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

<https://cllr.com.au/product/seek-the-social-psychology-of-event-investigations-unit-2/>

Semiotics and Risk

Module Three

Dates

10,11 April 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

<https://cllr.com.au/product/semiotics-and-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-3/>

Following-Leading in Risk

Module Four

Online

<https://cllr.com.au/product/leadership-and-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-4/>

The Social Psychology of High Reliability Organising.

Module Five

Online

<https://cllr.com.au/product/social-psychology-high-reliability-organising-unit-5/>

Holistic Ergonomics

Module Six

Online

<https://cllr.com.au/product/holistic-ergonomics-unit-6/>

Learning, Community and SPoR

Module Seven

Online

<https://cllr.com.au/product/learning-community-and-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-7/>

Social Amplification of Risk

Module Eight

Dates

30,31 January 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

<https://cllr.com.au/product/social-amplification-risk-unit-8/>

Due Diligence

Module Thirteen

Dates

20,21 February 2019

Location

Wayside Chapel Kings Cross Sydney

<https://cllr.com.au/product/due-diligence-workshop-unit-13/>

(places are limited for this workshop)

iThink

Module Twelve

Dates

1,2 May 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

<https://cllr.com.au/product/ithink-critical-thinking-dialectic-and-risk-unit-12/>

Social Politics of Risk

Module Fourteen

Dates

27,28 March 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

<https://cllr.com.au/product/the-social-politics-of-risk-unit-14/>

A Theology of Risk

Module Eighteen

Dates

23,24 January 2019

Location

Kambah ACT

email interest to: rob@cllr.com.au

To Come in Semester Two (TBA)

Module 9. MiProfile

Module 10. Risk Intelligence (elearning)

Module 11. Advanced Semiotics

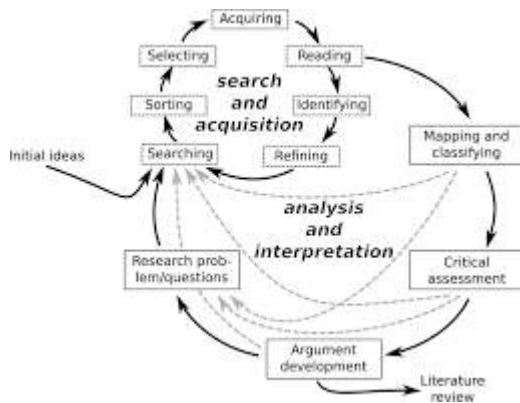
Module 15. Culture and Risk

Module 16. Transdisciplinary and Risk

Module 17. Ethics and Risk

Introducing Hayden Collins Principal Coach of Online Studies

Hermeneutics and The Language of Risk



The study of Hermeneutics is about the field of interpretation. Words are not neutral regardless of how they are defined in a dictionary, context is everything. This doesn't mean that one can make any word to mean anything but rather meaning in language is qualified by context, culture and historical use.

The discipline of Hermeneutics emerges from those interested interpretation of religious texts including the Bible. However, philosophical hermeneutics is quite different. A good introduction is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6wPTV5hyB0Y>

<https://blog.oup.com/2017/06/9-facts-about-hermeneutics/>

One of the challenges of philosophical hermeneutics is complexity. A reading of Ricoeur (2007) *The Conflict of Interpretations, Essays in Hermeneutics* is a good starting point.

Hermeneutics is qualified by semantics (linguistics, grammar and text as sign), semiotics (symbol systems) and semiosis (symbols/myth meaning). As Ricoeur makes clear 'word is both system and act, a seeing and saying' (p. xix). All language is caught up in a dialectic between the finite and infinite, closed and open and, the subject-object.

In Hermeneutics we learn to decipher text. The way language is used symbolically and metaphorically often means that meaning is hidden in its use.

Originally, Hermeneutics was a theological problem and a background in theology helps with developing a consistent hermeneutic. The philosophy of phenomenology is also a source in understanding philosophical hermeneutics and semiotics. Understanding the insertion of symbolic words into myths is critical for discerning meaning in language. For Ricoeur the subject as text is a text that is symbolic and, therefore calls for a work of discernment. The 'hermeneutic of suspicion' is important in the task of critical thinking. This is how one seeks out 'false consciousness' and the 'hermeneutics of belief'. The tools for enacting discernment in meaning are deconstruction and demythology. (Mythology and symbology are the flip side of the same coin.)

Why does this matter?

In the risk and safety industry there is much that is spoken that is non-sensical, the best example of this is the ideology of zero. As a symbol/myth, zero is the denial of fallibility and its use in language in the risk industry denotes perfectionism, inerrancy, infinity and brutality. This has been evidenced recently in Australia in the debate about pill testing for people attending music festivals.

The dominant discourse in the political sphere about illicit drugs is the brutality of zero tolerance (<https://www.news.com.au/national/crime/they-deserve-to-die-we-dont-care-callous-messages-in-the-wake-of-music-festival-drug-deaths/news-story/b2598d2071686d14e7417b7d3f48eaa6>) the idea of harm minimization is framed by the ZT lobby as being pro-drug abuse and anti-safety.

The language of zero tolerance of illicit drugs is often spoken about as the 'war on drugs' and 'getting tough on drugs'. This common discourse masks brutality in the name of care. Its effect is authoritarian, totalitarian and brutality in the name of good. Unfortunately, this approach doesn't work and indeed, creates the circumstances where there has been an increase in people dying at music festivals. You can read more on the debate on pill testing here:

- <http://www.doctusproject.com/2018/10/14/why-the-war-on-drugs-isnt-stopping-deaths-at-music-festivals/>
- https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/FlagPost/2018/May/The_pros_and_cons_of_pill_testing

The dominant myth in the risk and safety industry is the myth of scientific objectivity or positivism (<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/scientific-objectivity/>). This hermeneutic imagines that language, symbols, myths and data are objective when in fact, all discourse/language is value laden. The industry speaks in absolute ways when it comes to managing fallibility but rather than focusing on humans and people it focuses on objects and numbers. This is how it ends up with absurd statements like, there can be no other goal in safety than zero! Other absurd statements such as 'safety is a choice you make' or 'all accidents are preventable' are all fostered by a 'hermeneutic of objects'.

Indeed, the branding of 'safety' as a symbol in itself now is interpreted by many as the activity of 'dumb down' and unprofessionalism, most commonly evidenced in 'tick and flick', unethical curricula, brutalism and transdisciplinary blindness. To this day there is no such thing as 'an ethic of risk' in either the risk or safety industries. Without such an ethic, there can be no profession. Of course, an ideology of zero can never be ethical in the face of fallibility and risk.

The Tyranny of Perfectionism



Recently Psychology Today published research on perfectionism, asking the question 'Are You a Prisoner of Perfection' (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/intimacy-path-toward-spirituality/201811/are-you-prisoner-perfection>).

The article demonstrates that a 'hermeneutic of perfection' fosters risk avoidance, disappointment, depression and shame. Perfectionism is a mental health disorder (<https://www.apa.org/monitor/nov03/manyfaces.aspx>: https://www.vice.com/en_au/article/8gdgg4/how-perfectionism-destroyed-my-life) that creates denial, under-reporting and distress. The Global mantra of zero fostered by the World Congress on Safety (<http://visionzero.global/>) directly promotes the mental health disorder of perfectionism. The language of zero is promoted by most regulators and peak bodies on risk and safety in Australia.

National Drug Strategy Household Survey

When considering the challenges of addiction, pill testing and harm minimization it might be important to note what the data reveals about drug use in Australia (<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/illegal-use-of-drugs/ndshs-2016-key-findings/contents/highlights-from-the-2016->

survey).

Explaining the Laurel/Yanni DEbate

For those who have been caught up in the Laurel and Yanny debate, the following may interest you.
<https://edition.cnn.com/2018/05/15/health/yanny-laurel-audio-social-media-trnd/index.html?no-st=1545518484>

It's all in the Framing and Priming



The two tools above are examples of what participants receive in workshops on messaging and semiotics. If we want to be effective in communication we must consider the nature of the unconscious in how we message to people. Understanding pitch, framing, priming, mirroring and anchoring is critical in knowing if our messaging is effective. Most of the messaging in risk and safety this is highly ineffective is because core semiotic principles are ignored.

If you want to see how NOT to frame and prime go no further than the latest recruiting campaign by the British Army (<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/british-army-urges-snowflakes-selfie-addicts-to-sign-up>).

In an attempt to be positive the Army has used the stereotyping of young people and thereby endorsed common myths about 'Millennials' (if there is such a thing). Attempting to be positive about stereotypes actually endorses the stereotype and primes those in a group being stereotyped to reject the prime. Trying to use a perjorative stereotype as a positive 'primes' the opposite. We see this in safety where passion is labelled as being a 'nerd' or 'dork'.

If you want to understand more about messaging, discerning, framing, pitching, priming, anchoring and related symbology then register for the module on Semiotics here: <https://cllr.com.au/product/semiotics-and-the-social-psychology-of-risk-unit-3/>

Competition Giveaway - Risk Makes Sense



Can you find the cat amongst the owls? No cheating.

If you can, email your solution to admin@cllr.com.au and the first 5 correct entries will receive a complimentary copy of the first book in the series on risk: Risk Makes Sense now sold more than 10,000 copies.

If you already have a copy of the book and wish to use it as a gift please include with your entry your postal address and who you would like the book addressed to in a greeting by Dr Long in the

inside cover.

What is a Meme?



The Social Psychology of Risk is interested in Mimetics (imitation) and Poetics (linguistics in literature). Mimetics is about representation and is a critical aspect in understanding the dynamics of learning.

Many concepts are represented in myths, symbols, poetics and aesthetics. This is why hermeneutics is so important in discerning meaning in communication. This includes covert messaging more than overt messaging. The British Army recruitment campaign is a good example of how NOT to frame and prime a group. The covert messaging communicates to the unconscious and is much more powerful than overt messaging. In the case of the British Army, a huge fail. Affirming the negative as a positive, affirms the negative.

A meme is a socially transmitted idea embodied in a cultural symbol for example, the idea that promoting oneself as a 'safety nerd'. What this conjures up symbolically in the unconscious is a person who is out of touch, socially inept and overly intellectual. Such a meme doesn't work. People don't engage or identify with 'nerds'. Nerds don't have the skills to communicate and connect with others. The image/symbol of a nerd is of one with their heads stuck in a book or computer with no social skills (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nerd>).


Memes are a significant omission in popular definitions of culture that are maintained by the risk and safety industry. The silly definition that culture is 'what we do around here' completely misses the power of memes and how they condition belief and decision making in risk. This is why all the curves, pyramids and matrices that are objectified by the industry are so destructive.

Memes are a critical aspect of symbolic messaging and to the discerning demonstrate how the industry normalizes the abnormal eg. zero. We study the power of memes in the module on semiotics.

Does Sending Thoughts and Prayers Matter?



In an interesting study by Cass Sunstein (<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-11-29/do-prayers-help-victims-of-violence-and-disaster>) he found that those who send 'thoughts and prayers' to people in suffering are less likely to do anything active in support response. It seems


send thoughts and prayers.

that pro-action is less likely with those who

Sunstein is the author of a host of books on the social psychology of risk or what he calls 'behavioural economics'. You can read about Sunstein here: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cass_Sunstein

One of my favourites by Sunstein is (2009). *Going to Extremes: How Like Minds Unite and Divide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Sunstein is particularly helpful in understanding the Social Politics of Risk.

Greg Smith's New Book – Paper Safe

Greg Smith has released a new book called Paper Safe, The triumph of bureaucracy in safety management. Greg's work critiques the excesses of bureaucracy in Health and Safety demonstrating that much of what is maintained in paper systems in the industry is ineffectual and indeed, an organization's source of legal liability. You can read about and purchase the book here:

<https://www.waylandlegal.com.au/blog/paper-safe>

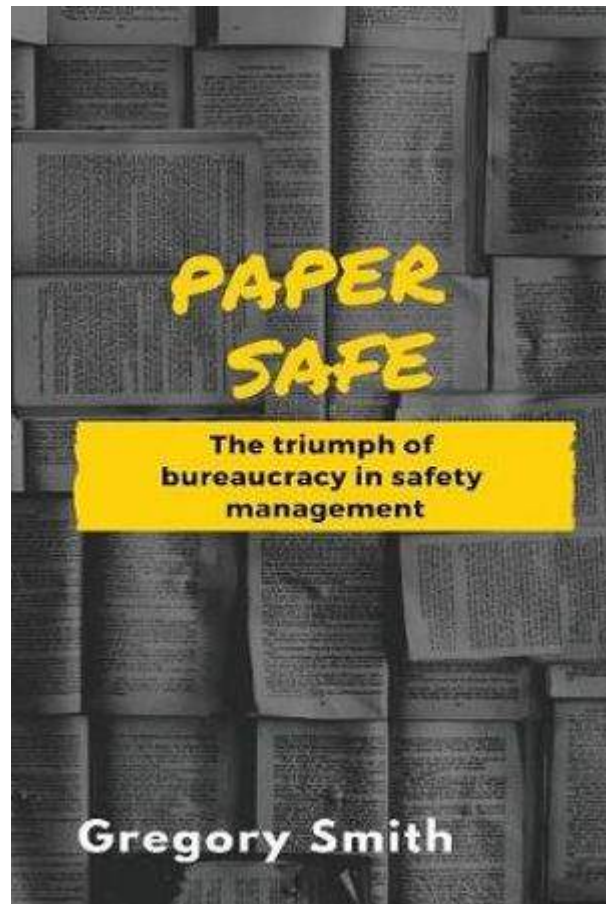
Due Diligence Workshop Sydney 20,21 February 2019

Greg and Rob will be next presenting their very popular course on Due Diligence in Sydney on 20,21 February, 2019. You can register here: <https://cllr.com.au/product/due-diligence-workshop-unit-13>

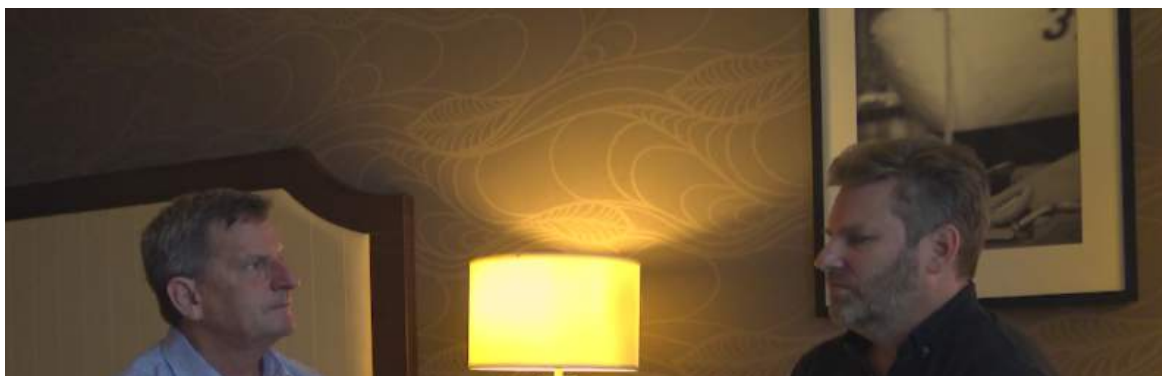
You can see Rob and Greg's free video series Risky Conversations here:

<https://vimeo.com/album/3938199>

You can download the free talking book of Risky Conversations here: <https://www.humandymensions.com/product/risky-conversations-talking-book-free-mp3-files/>



Conversations with Jeff Lyth on The Future of Safety





On Rob's last visit to Vancouver he got together with Jeff Lyth and had a series of informal conversations about the current state of the safety industry. Jeff is the Director of QSP Leadership (<https://www.qspleadership.com/>) and is particularly insightful about humanizing approaches to risk. You can see these conversations here:<https://vimeo.com/album/5564629>

LINKS

Social Psychology of Risk Website

<https://spor.com.au/>

Centre for Leadership and Learning in Risk

<https://cllr.com.au/>

Samples of Video Inductions and Work by Invision Pictures

<https://www.humandimensions.com/services-and-programs/invision/>

Rob's Book Recommendations on

[Safety](http://www.safetyrisk.net/top-20-safety-books/)<http://www.safetyrisk.net/top-20-safety-books/>

Rob's Blog

<http://www.safetyrisk.net/author/rob-long/>

Human Dymensions Web Site

<http://www.humandimensions.com/>

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