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DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER SERIES

Professor Yves Gendron
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Dr. Gendron is highly committed to qualitative research. One of his main endeavors as qualitative researcher is to better understand key features of public accountants' daily lives. He is also interested in legitimization processes surrounding public accountants' claims to expertise, seeking to comprehend how accountants attempted to establish their presence in the jurisdictions of performance measurement, online auditing, and consulting.

Dr. Gendron's academic work has been published in a variety of journals such as *Accounting, Organizations and Society*; *Auditing: A Journal of Practice & Theory*; *Contemporary Accounting Research*; *Journal of Management Studies*, and *Organization Studies*. He is member of the editorial board of ten journals – and is currently Associate Editor at *Contemporary Accounting Research* and *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*.

Topic: “The Construction of Risk Management Infallibility in Corporate Boardrooms”

Abstract:

In spite of an uninterrupted series of corporate collapses over the last several decades, the risk management discipline is increasingly influential across the world of organizations, as if the discipline's legitimacy is impermeable to scandals that, at least from certain critical angles, cast doubt on the efficacy of risk management. Relying on an anthropological perspective casting light on social processes that protect prevailing institutions from “pollution” and aberrations, we examine the processes by which the infallibility of the risk management discipline is constructed and sustained in sites where the destinies of corporate life are articulated, that is to say corporate boardrooms. To carry out the investigation we conducted more than 30 interviews with corporate board stakeholders, mostly board members and corporate consultants. Our findings point to the key role played by visual representations of risk, which provide a fertile frame that delineates certain trajectories of sense-making and intervention. Also, actors involved in risk management processes tend to interpret aberration cases through angles that put the blame on some implementation deficiency, thereby ensuring that the discipline's key assumptions are not questioned. As such, our study points to the existence of a powerful and extensive system of thought firmly grounded in the risk management community, whose peripheral elements are subject to intense work and re-conceptualization in the aftermath of aberrations, thereby providing the discipline with a high degree of flexibility in coping with the frictions and unpredictability of real life. In the process, the hard core assumptions of the system of thought tend to evade scrutiny, as if the domestication of uncertainty constitutes a much more soothing finality than concluding about the impossibility of reining in danger.