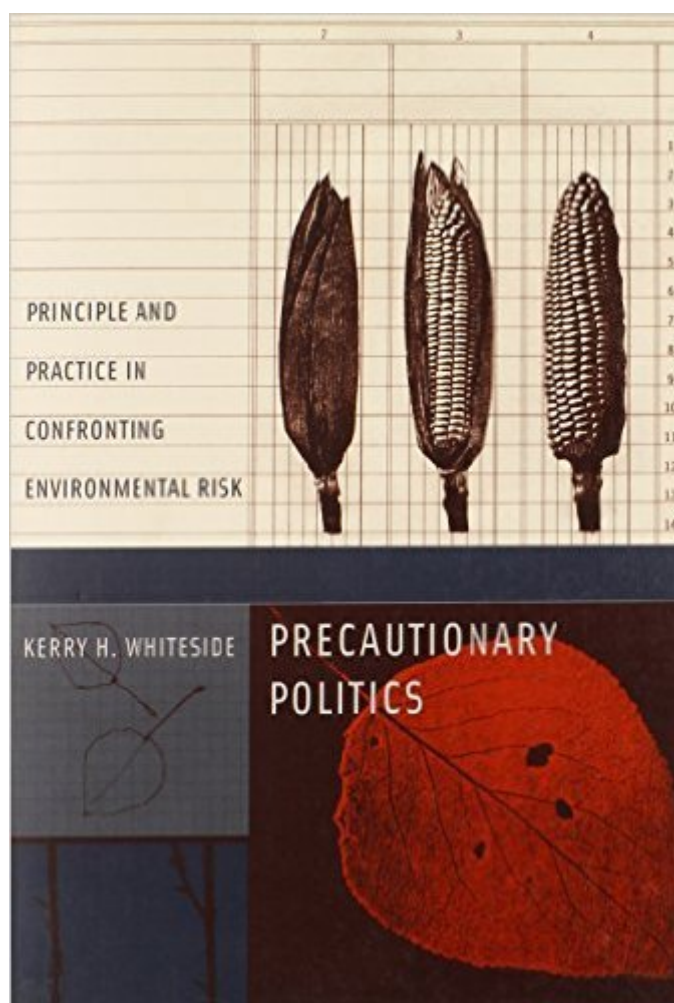


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# Precautionary Politics: Principle And Practice In Confronting Environmental Risk (Urban And Industrial Environments)



## Synopsis

The precautionary principle--which holds that action to address threats of serious or irreversible environmental harm should be taken even in the absence of scientific certainty--has been accepted as a key feature of environmental law throughout the European Union. In the United States, however, it is still widely unknown, and much of what has been written on the topic takes a negative view. *Precautionary Politics* provides a comprehensive analysis of the precautionary principle--its origins and development, its meaning and rationale, its theoretical context, and its policy implications. Kerry Whiteside looks at the application of the principle (and the controversies it has stirred) and compares European and American attitudes toward it and toward environmental regulation in general. Too often, Whiteside argues, American critics of the precautionary principle pay insufficient attention to how the principle has been debated, refined, and elaborated elsewhere. *Precautionary Politics* fills this gap. Whiteside demonstrates the different responses of Europe and the United States, first by describing the controversy over genetically modified crops, and then by using this example throughout the book to illustrate application of the precautionary principle in different contexts. He contrasts the European view that new types of risk require specially adapted modes of regulation with the American method of science-based risk assessment, and argues that despite Bush administration opposition, U.S.-European convergence on precaution is possible. Finally, he looks at the ways in which participatory innovation can help produce environmentally positive results. Whiteside's systematic defense of the precautionary principle will be an important resource for students, scholars, activists, and policymakers and is particularly suitable for classroom use.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

First, Kudos to . I ordered this book yesterday at around 4pm, and it was on my front porch this morning. I read it whilst drinking my coffee, and I am reviewing it around 24 hours after ordering. rocks! Okay, now for the book review: I ordered this book because I was interested in understanding the interplay between scientific risk, uncertainty, and policymaking in the United States. I was not disappointed. The author, Kerry Whiteside, is a professor of Government, so I was not sure if he would be able to write cogently on issues of "environmental risk," but he was able to seamlessly combine the science with the political philosophy. Granted, he did not delve deeply into the science, but I had the impression that his grasp of the issue was firm. The book is very readable, mostly because the author uses his organizational skills to present his arguments with clarity. If you have ever read any books dealing with political philosophy, you might find that he is unusual in that regard. I think I can sum up the thesis of this book with an analogy used by the author--Pascal's wager. As you recall, Pascal's belief was that there was a small likelihood of the existence of God. If a person chooses to believe in God, and God turns out NOT to exist, nothing much has been lost except perhaps a few hours on a Sunday. However, if God DOES exist and a person chooses NOT to believe, then...well, it is all downhill from there, if you know what I mean. The idea is, there is a small risk with huge consequences, so it is best to prepare for the huge consequences. Similarly, certain technological advancements have small risks of unknown but potentially devastating consequences, such as global extinction. Therefore, it is "prudent" to be somewhat circumspect.

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