



ISM SEMINAR

Spring Term 2016-17

Speaker: Dr Pinar Ozcan, WBS

Title: Playing cat and mouse: Contests over regulatory categorization of dietary supplements in the U.S.

Date: Wednesday 25 January 2017

Venue: 1.003, WBS

Time: 14:00

Abstract: Regulatory categorization can be a matter of life and death to firms as it sets legal limitations to the production and sales of their product. In this paper, we set out to uncover this critical process, for which there is only anecdotal information in extant literature, by asking, how are regulatory categories determined through the strategies and interaction of firms, regulators and other category audiences? We use extensive archival data to examine how US dietary supplement makers first moved their products from drug to food category in 1976 and when the FDA again applied stricter regulation, created an entirely new category in 1994, which fuelled their explosive market growth in the subsequent decade. Our findings show that regulatory categorization is the outcome of a contest between the regulator and regulated firms where both parties pull other audiences (e.g. category incumbents, legislators, consumers) into this process as constituents. From the perspective of regulated firms, we uncover the micro-mechanisms of strategic categorization in the regulatory space, with links and contributions to institutional work and corporate political action.

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