

The University of Chicago
Department of Statistics

Seminar

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**“Risk and Revolution: Napoleon, Casanova, and the Loterie
de France 1758-1836”**

Monday, October 1, 2001 at 4:00 pm
133 Eckhart Hall, 5734 S. University Avenue

ABSTRACT

What did "Powerball" have to do with the Fall of the Bastille? Just how risk-adverse was Robespierre? How did the sans-culottes lose their culottes? In the eighteenth century in France, citizens and royalty faced a multitude of risks, from sexually transmitted disease to decapitation. An unusual data source on the French Lottery provides a window on how financial risk was addressed in that tumultuous time, and how the emerging calculus of probabilities affected its perception. The story involves an unusually diverse cast of characters, including Casanova and Bonaparte, as well as some modern statistical technique.