

# Energy and Resources Group Fall 2009 Colloquium Series (ER295)

## October 21, 2009



### **Marion Fourcade-Gourinchas**

Associate Professor, Department of Sociology  
University of California Berkeley

**Cents and Sensibility: Economic Valuation and the  
Nature of “Nature” in France and America**

**110 Barrows Hall – 4:00 P.M.**

Marion Fourcade (PhD Harvard University) is associate professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley. A comparative sociologist, she is interested primarily in investigating and theorizing about how individuals in different countries think about the world and act in it, where these differences come from, and what their macro-social consequences might be. She has worked comparatively on the formation of knowledge, disciplines and professions; the making of economic policies; the forms of political organization; and international processes and dynamics. Her first book, *Economists and Societies* (Princeton University Press 2009), explores the institutions and cultural forces that have shaped the professional identities, practical activities and disciplinary projects of economists in the United States, Britain, and France in the twentieth century. The place of economic expertise and measurement technologies across cultures is also at the core of her next book project on the roots and consequences of social classifications (tentatively titled *Measure for Measure: Social Ontologies of Classification*). Professor Fourcade's work has appeared in numerous professional outlets, such as the *American Journal of Sociology*, the *American Sociological Review*, and *Theory and Society*.

In this lecture she will present on October 21, Professor Fourcade compares the legal treatment of two large-scale maritime oil spills [the Amoco Cadiz (Brittany (France), 1978) and Exxon Valdez (Alaska, 1989)], investigating in particular how French and American plaintiffs sought to obtain monetary compensation for injuries to the 'natural environment.' She shows that the significant national differences in claims and outcomes may be partly explained by the valuation technologies used by the parties, which in turn are inextricably linked to varying cultural assumptions about the concept of nature, the broader social legitimacy of monetary exchange, and institutional legacies about the prerogatives of different types of scientific experts (economists and others) and political actors in the legal process.