The ability to recover oil and natural gas from previously-inaccessible geologic formations is simultaneously being described as a silver bullet for economic growth and energy independence, as well as a land-use disaster and a “game-changing” accelerant of global climate change. While assessing the probability and magnitude of risks to public health and the environment continues to occupy researchers, regulatory authorities in the U.S. and around the world must confront whether and how to assert controls over the pace of, and safeguards upon, technologies including the “fracking” of shale to release natural gas and surface mining or steam injection of oil sands. In just the past month, one U.S. state has banned hydraulic fracturing altogether (New York), while another has given it a definitive but regulated green light (Maryland).

This seminar will feature presentations by, and discussion among, three leading scholars of the regulatory governance of unconventional oil and gas development. Panel members will share their insights on how regulators can balance the various conflicting policy and economic interests that surround hydraulic fracturing and other unconventional techniques of energy extraction.