

Crisis Communication

JOUR 4421/6421-001

Fall 2015

MW 12:40 – 2:05 p.m.

Meeman 112

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS

CATALOG/COURSE DESCRIPTION

Explores theories and research related to public relations communication before, during and after a crisis; examines the fundamentals of organizational communication, crisis management and strategic planning.

OVERVIEW

This course will explore theories and research related to communication before, during, and after a crisis. Students examine the fundamentals of organizational communication, crisis management, and strategic and crisis communication planning and examine case studies of a number of real-life crises: organizational crises, natural disasters, accidents, terrorism incidents, health crises, and major crises of credibility. The goal is to prepare students to better strategize, plan, execute, and evaluate crisis communication across a variety of types of organizations and crises. Students will be exposed to crisis management best practice principles, dominant and emerging research trends, and dominant and emerging theories. Additionally, students should become better analysts of crisis communication in the world around them.

PREREQUISITE

None

TEXTBOOKS

Required:

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2011). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity* (2nd ed.). Washington, D.C.: Sage.

Zaremba, A. J. (2010). *Crisis communication: Theory and practice*. New York: M. E. Sharpe.

Other readings and articles will be provided to all students via eCourseware.

Recommended:

Heath, R. L., & O'Hair, D. (Eds.) *Handbook of risk and crisis communication*. New York: Routledge.

There are a variety of crisis books that specialize in a particular area, including disaster sociology, complexity theory, organizational response, public health, terrorism, and rhetorical analysis. If you have a particular area of interest, consider asking Dr. Janoske for a recommendation on a book within that area.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

This course is offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Enrolled graduate students are required to do work appropriate for their academic level. This includes but is not limited to completing the crisis news/research spotlight as an individual (instead of in a group), and completing an analysis of current crisis communication plans to supplement the final simulation response paper/press conference. More details about assignments will be announced in class.

GRADING

There are 1,000 possible points in this class. At the end of the semester, your class average will be calculated and fractions will be rounded to the nearest whole number. Letter grades will be determined according to the scale below.

<i>Crisis News or Research Spotlight Presentation</i>	150 points
<i>Crisis News or Research Spotlight Paper</i>	100 points
<i>Final Simulation Response Paper</i> 100 group, 100 individual	200 points
<i>Final Press Conference</i> 50 group, 50 individual	100 points
<i>Quizzes (4)</i> 50 points each	200 points
<i>Class Participation</i>	250 points
<i>Total</i>	1,000 points

A+ 967-1000	B+ 867-899	C+ 767-799	D+ 667-699
A 934-966	B 834-866	C 734-766	D 634-665
A- 900-933	B- 800-833	C- 700-733	D- 600-633
			F Below 600

QUALITY OF WORK

All work in this course should follow AP Style, including proper spelling, grammar, and language. A large part of public relations is having a polished written concept of what you are communicating. This includes all class work and presentations. Problems in these or other areas will result in the deduction of points.

I expect your work to be good and to be yours. What is not yours should be fully cited. In documenting sources you should use APA formatting. If you need help with writing and citing sources, please see me for resources. In addition, Purdue University's Online Writing Lab is an excellent resource, and can be found at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

QUESTIONS ABOUT GRADES

If you would like to ask about a grade, please make an appointment to meet with me outside of class time, as I will not discuss grades via email or during class. If you have a question or problem with a grade, exam question, or in-class assignment, you have 48 hours after the assignment is returned to you to contact me, or the grade stands. Your question or appeal must be stated in writing, citing your position and why you feel the mark is incorrect. The appeal should be turned in to the professor or sent via email within the stated time frame.

Additionally, you are responsible for tracking your grade online and meeting with the professor early in the semester if you are concerned about your overall grade. Meeting with the professor early and often can help both parties involved find ways to improve student-instructor understanding and quality of work.

COURSE SCHEDULE

This is a basic schedule for topics and major assignments over the course of the semester. Although every effort will be made to stick with this schedule, please understand that some material may require more or less discussion and class time. Thus, changes to the schedule may occur. All changes will be announced in class.

Notes:

1. Readings should be completed prior to the session they will be discussed.
2. Crisis news or research spotlight papers and presentations will be ongoing.
Undergraduate students will work in small groups to find and present a relevant news item or article (approved by the instructor); graduate students will work individually. One group or individual will present their work per class period.

Week 1 (August 24, August 26): Introduction to Crisis Communication and the Course

Chapters 1 and 2, USS
Definitions and crisis uncertainty

Week 2 (August 31, September 2): Foundations of Crisis Communication

Chapter 1, Zaremba
Principles and more definitions

Week 3 (September 7 (no class, Labor Day), September 9): Crisis Theories and Misunderstandings

Chapter 3, Zaremba
Chaos and complexity theories; the use of theory in crisis communication

Week 4 (September 14, September 16): Strategic Management Approach to Crisis Communication

Readings on contingency theory, overview of crisis communication research; Quiz 1
Crisis communication teams, training spokespeople, managing uncertainty

*****PRD Ethics Twitter chat is Thursday, September 17 @ 7pm CT*****

Week 5 (September 21, September 23): Publics and Crisis Communication

Chapter 3, USS; Readings on emotion and crisis
Emotions and coping strategies; multicultural publics

Week 6 (September 28, September 30): Traditional and New Media

Readings on channel selection, use of social media in a crisis
Differences and understandings of a variety of channels and media options

Week 7 (October 5, October 7): Planning for Crises

Chapter 4, Zaremba; case studies; Quiz 2
Proactive planning and environmental scanning

Week 8 (October 12 (no class, Fall Break), October 14): Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

Selected readings on SCCT
Understanding and critically analyzing the most prominent crisis communication theory

Week 9 (October 19, October 21): Responding to Crises

Chapter 5, Zaremba; case studies
Discussing and analyzing options for crisis response beyond SCCT

Week 10 (October 26, October 28): Ethics and Leadership

Chapter 6, Zaremba; Chapters 4 and 12, USS
Transparency, ambiguity, and value building; Quiz 3

Week 11 (November 2, November 4): Recovery and Resilience

Chapters 10 and 13, USS
Learning through failure and the discourse of renewal; the reality of long-term recovery

Week 13 (November 16, November 18): Special Topics: Public Health, Terrorism, Natural Disasters, Community Relations

Chapters 5-8, USS (Specific pages from each chapter will be assigned in class); other readings
Unique aspects of important and frequently researched subareas of crisis communication
The intersections of crisis, media, social capital, and community

Week 14 (November 23, November 25 (no class—Thanksgiving): Best Practices in Crisis Communication

Articles from 2006 *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, Special Issue on Crisis
Communication and various responses
How does it all come together?
Quiz 4

Week 15 (November 30, December 2): Crisis Simulation and Press Conference

In class simulation and press conference based on created situation. To be discussed in class.

Final Exam Period

10 a.m. Wednesday, December 9, 2015

FIVE PILLARS FOR JOUR4421/6421

- **Professionalism:** Students will learn the professional needs and ethical obligations of public relations professionals during a variety of crisis situations. They will be exposed to a variety of ethical standards from both legal and professional organizations. Students will continue work on their personal portfolio site as a way of establishing their personal professional brand.
- **Writing:** This class will focus on writing in a crisis situation, where time and accuracy are of utmost importance. Students will write a variety of materials for simulated crisis events, including press releases, press conference statements, posts for various social media platforms, and learn theoretical understandings for creating more effective messages.
- **Multimedia:** Students in this class will work on material for both print and social media applications.
- **Critical Thinking:** Students will work to develop an understanding of how to best respond in a crisis situation, how to determine target publics and messages, and how to balance all of those things in a delicate or disaster situation.
- **Media Literacy:** Students will increase their media literacy by looking at how to engage with a variety of traditional and social media, to see how crises can occur, grow, and be stopped through these channels, and how to interact and engage with others in the media appropriately in order to move through a crisis situation effectively.

ASSESSMENT

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOUR 4421/6421:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communication;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

HOW PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES WILL BE MET:

Cognitive Objectives To Be Mastered (Ability To Explain, Analyze, Understand, Think Critically):

- Students will develop an understanding of what constitutes a “theory” and how the scientific method works in building and advancing theory.
- Students will attain familiarity with the broad range of theories in the field of journalism and mass communications, as well as an understanding of how this body of theory and research has developed over the history of the field.
- Students will learn how to meaningfully apply mass communication theory to the practical daily work of journalists, advertisers and public relations professionals.
- Students will learn how to develop sources for and write an academic literature review in association with a set of hypotheses or research questions.
- Students will develop skills in synthesizing substantial amounts of complicated information and identifying important points in literature.
- Students will learn the important role gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and other forms of diversity play in the production and effects of mass communication.

Performance Standards To Be Met (Demonstrable Skills, Abilities, Techniques, Applied Competencies):

- Students will read and critically analyze journal articles and book chapters on major mass communications theories.
- Students will practice breaking down academic research articles to their most important points to facilitate their understanding of the first steps in synthesizing a broad array of information.
- Students will lead and participate in class discussions that deepen their understanding of theories and how they apply to the real world.
- Students will be able to work effectively in a group
- Students will complete a simulation of a crisis situation and respond effectively using various mass media channels
- Students will be able to recognize and analyze crisis communication concepts and theories in crisis situations around them and in the news

HOW ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING WILL BE MET FOR JOUR 4421/6421:

This class is designed to offer an overview of dominant and emerging crisis communication theory and practice, and to offer students the opportunity to both read case studies where those items were utilized, and to have the opportunity to put those theories into practice for themselves. Therefore, assessment will occur on the following levels:

- **Awareness:** learn about the importance of research and theory application and building in crisis communication
- **Understanding:** understand how to recognize and apply theory and principles in crisis events around them; see how crisis communication best practices and principles are utilized
- **Application:** able to apply best practices, theoretical concepts, and crisis communication strategies in a real-time crisis simulation

PROFESSIONAL VALUES AND COMPETENCIES FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communication requires that, irrespective of their particular specialization, all graduates should be aware of certain core values and competencies and be to

- Understand and apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located, as well as receive instruction in and understand the range of systems of freedom of expression around the world, including the right to dissent, to monitor and criticize power, and to assemble and petition for redress of grievances;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- Apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING FOR JOURNALISM PROGRAM:

The Council seeks to promote student learning and encourages experimentation and innovation.

Assessment is a system of evaluation of student learning at the course or unit level (as opposed to grading at the individual level). Three criteria should guide assessment of student learning:

- *Awareness*: familiarity with specific information, including facts, concepts, theories, laws and regulations, processes and effects.
- *Understanding*: assimilation and comprehension of information, concepts, theories and ideas.
- *Application*: competence in relating and applying skills, information, concepts, theories and ideas to the accomplishment of tasks.

DEPARTMENT POLICIES

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:

All Department of Journalism undergraduate students are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Students are to begin the portfolio in JOUR 2121 and contribute to it during every skills course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their concentrations.

EMAIL:

You must have your UM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have your UM email forwarded to that account. Go to <http://iam.memphis.edu> to implement forwarding of UM email. You are required to check your email daily. You are responsible for complying with any email sent to you by your professor or the university.

MOBILE PHONES AND LAPTOPS:

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone to be used during class or to complete class assignments. Others do not allow them. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. Students are permitted three total unexcused absences without penalty. After three absences, the student's final grade will be deducted one letter grade for each absence. After seven unexcused absences, the student will fail the course. Absences for illness and other catastrophic emergencies, such as a death in the family, must be documented (e.g. doctor's note or obituary) to be excused from the total absence count. Students with excessive unexcused absences are encouraged to withdraw from the course prior to the drop deadline.

DEADLINES:

All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and mass communications. Assignments turned in late will NOT be graded. Late work is not accepted unless prior arrangements have been made with the instructor. Students are NOT permitted to make up assignments, quizzes, tests, etc. that occurred during an unexcused absence. Students who will miss class and/or a deadline because of an excused absence are expected to notify the instructor immediately upon knowing the absence will occur; exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances. Students who are absent during the final exam are not permitted to make up the exam and will earn a grade of 0, which might result in failure of the course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

In addition to university-wide policies stated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities, the Department of Journalism considers making up quotes from sources, turning in substantially the same assignment for credit in two different courses, a student receiving any assistance from others for work assigned to be done on his/her own, and violations of copyright law as acts of academic dishonesty punishable to the degree determined appropriate by the course instructor and department chair. Penalties might include grade reductions or dismissal of the student from the university.

“Your written work may be submitted to Turnitin.com, or a similar electronic detection method, for an evaluation of the originality of your ideas and proper use and attribution of sources. As part of this process, you may be required to submit electronic as well as hard copies of your written work, or be given other instructions to follow. By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process and that the assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com’s restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Any assignment not submitted according to the procedures given by the instructor may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.” (Office of Legal Counsel, October 17, 2005)

Intellectual property and copyright guidelines

1. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, but the way they are described can.
2. Anything set down in a tangible form, i.e., written, is by law copyrighted.
3. If, in a paraphrase, your work is “substantially similar” to a copyrighted work, you are guilty of copyright infringement.
4. A citation indicates where you got material. However, that portion you do not show as a direct quote must be “substantially original” to you. In other words, you can’t just paste in something from another’s work, put a citation at the bottom and call it your own. You need a full rewrite in your own words and syntax so the unquoted material is “substantially original” to you.

Plagiarism: From UM Student Handbook: The term “plagiarism” includes, but is not limited to, the use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full or clear acknowledgement. It also includes the unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.

ONLINE SETEs:

You are urged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. Once your instructor has posted your grade, you can immediately see that grade, provided you completed a teacher evaluation for that class. How to access your evaluation forms: Log in using your UUID and email password; click on the gray “Student” tab; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the “Submit” button at the bottom of the form. It will only take a few minutes of your time. We take the evaluations very seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and will be appreciated.

DISABILITY:

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

DIVERSITY:

Students are required to respect the differences of others and treat all persons with respect. Discriminatory, derogatory and threatening language or behavior will not be tolerated. Further, students are expected to consider their work through a diverse mind. Mass communications reach a mass audience, and students should be aware of how those messages are received by a diverse audience.

WEATHER POLICY:

Check with local media and the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather. If the university is closed or classes are canceled, this course will not meet. However, students will still be responsible for that day's work.

AP STYLE AND GRAMMAR:

All written work in this class should follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. If you don't know the style for a particular phrase, look it up or ask your classmates or the instructor.