

## **Crisis Communication**

PBRL 4421-001

Spring 2018

TR 11:20 a.m. – 12:45 p.m.

Meeman 112

Dr. Melissa L. Janoske

Office: Meeman 306

Office hours: M 11:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m., TR 1 – 3 p.m., and by appointment

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## **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

### **CATALOG 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**

PBRL 3421

### **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.

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.

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

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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 may use either APA or MLA 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>.

I am willing to read over and provide comments/edits on rough drafts of all work, but require a minimum of 24 hours for turnaround. This should be done via email, not eCourseware.

### 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.

### **Attendance**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your job in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

No points will be deducted from your final grade if you have four or fewer absences. Each additional absence beyond those four will result in a deduction of five percentage points from your final numerical average. For example, if your final average is 83 (B) and you have five absences, your course grade would be a 78 (C+). This absence policy includes **ALL** absences. It will be assumed that each absence is valid. If you are on a school-sponsored trip or are ill and miss class, it will count. No verification, explanation, or note is necessary. Habitual or excessive late arrivals to/early leaving from class can combine to count as an absence.

In addition, frequently we will engage in class exercises that will count as participation points; if you are not in class, you will have 24 hours from the time of class to complete the participation assignment and turn it in via eCourseware. Doing so is entirely your responsibility; if the participation assignment is not completed within those 24 hours, no participation points will be given.

Late work will be accepted, but points will be deducted for lateness. The absolute final day to turn in any late work will be the final day of class for the semester (11:20 a.m. on April 24, 2018). No work, late or otherwise, will be accepted beyond that date.

## 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:

- Readings should be completed prior to the session they will be discussed.
- 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). One group or individual will present their work per class period.

### **Week 1 (January 16-19): Introduction to Crisis Communication and the Course**

Chapters 1 and 2, USS

Definitions and crisis uncertainty

### **Week 2 (January 22-26): Foundations of Crisis Communication**

Principles and more definitions

### **Week 3 (January 29-February 2): Crisis Theories and Misunderstandings**

Chaos and complexity theories; the use of theory in crisis communication

### **Week 4 (February 5-9): Strategic Management Approach to Crisis Communication**

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

### **Week 5 (February 12-16): Publics and Crisis Communication**

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

### **Week 6 (February 19-23): 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 (February 26-March 2): Planning for Crises**

Case studies; Quiz 2 Proactive planning  
and environmental scanning

### **March 5-9: No class, Spring Break**

### **Week 8 (March 12-16): Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)**

Selected readings on SCCT

Understanding and critically analyzing the most prominent crisis communication theory

**Week 9 (March 19-23): Responding to Crises**

case studies. Discussing and analyzing options for crisis response beyond SCCT

**Week 10 (March 26-30): Ethics and Leadership**

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

**Week 11 (April 2-6): Recovery and Resilience**

Chapters 10 and 13, USS

Learning through failure and the discourse of renewal; the reality of long-term recovery

**Week 13 (April 9-13): 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 (April 16-20): 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 (April 23-25): Crisis Simulation and Press Conference**

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

**Final Exam Period**

**8 a.m. Thursday, May 3, 2018**

## DEPARTMENT POLICIES

### **PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENT:**

All students in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of their work. Undergraduate students are to begin the portfolio in JRSM 3900 and contribute to it from every course thereafter. The portfolio should contain samples of the student's work from his/her courses and/or professional experience and should develop as the student builds skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while students are enrolled in the capstone course for their majors.

Students may use any type of web hosting for their portfolios, but it must have an independent and professional URL. The department requires students to use WordPress to build their portfolio sites. Students are encouraged to consider purchasing a URL and hosting if they plan to use the portfolio for a long term, but must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

Students should have a professional email address they plan to use throughout their professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail or Yahoo.

All portfolios must contain the following items:

- Samples of work from courses and/or professional activities. (Example: Broadcasting students must include a video reel)
- A current résumé
- A personal profile
- Contact information/means of contact
- Social media links

Students might wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, SoundSlides presentations, design PDFs, audio files, and Storify pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career the student seeks after graduation. Thus, each student's portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

### **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 the <http://iam.memphis.edu> website 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. Others do not. Your instructor will set the policy for her/her specific class.

**ATTENDANCE:**

Class attendance is mandatory in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance, or habitual late arrival. No late work will be accepted without prior arrangements, which are acceptable to your professor. Students may not be permitted to make up any missing work unless it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency such as a death in the family that can be documented (e.g. with a doctor's note or a copy of the newspaper obituary). This is a professional program for journalists who are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. If you have some problem making it to class on time make arrangements to fix the problem or consider taking another class. You should consider this class your "job" in the educational process and be on time just as you would elsewhere.

**CHEATING:**

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

Further, as this is a journalism/mass communication class, students are expected to comply with copyright law, and must have sufficient permission to use any copyrighted materials used in creative projects, unless otherwise informed in cases of exercises or reproduction.

"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)

**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.

**DEADLINES:**

Remember there's a reason "DEAD" makes up half the word "deadline." All deadlines are firm. This is journalism and strategic media. If you get into trouble, talk to your

instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

**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.

**DISABILITY:**

Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact your instructor privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall 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:**

Always 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.