

# Crisis Communication

PBRL 4421-M90

Spring 2024

Online

## Assoc. Prof. of Practice Tori Cliff

She/Her/Hers

**Office hours:** virtual, 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.

### Textbooks, Software and Required Materials

Coombes, T. (2018). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding (5th ed.)* Thousand Oaks, CA. SAGE Publications. ISBN: 9781544331959

Other articles and tools will be shared both in Canvas and in class; please check Canvas weekly for required reading and multimedia materials.

### Classroom Format

This class is held asynchronously online within Canvas. The materials include items like presentations/slide decks, discussions, activities, exercises, research, projects and quizzes. We will spend time learning terminology, types of crises, processes, best practices, and looking at case studies to learn from them.

**Meeman Lab Availability:** Open labs 9:30-4:30 Monday-Friday. In addition to Meeman, labs are available in the Tech Hub and the Library.

For students that may not have access to a computer, the McWherter Library has laptops on loan. Please visit the Checkout desk in the library or visit:

<https://www.memphis.edu/libraries/technology/laptop.php>

### Accessing the course website

1. Go to the University of Memphis Canvas home page: <https://memphis.instructure.com/>
2. Log in using your University of Memphis username and password.
3. In the Term Year course list available to you, click on the link for PBRL 4421 to enter the course and read the instructions on the welcoming page

### Students with disabilities & accommodations

If you will need accommodations through [Disability Resources](#) to meet any of the requirements

of this course, please have DRS share your accommodations plan directly with me. I'm happy to work with you to make sure you can be successful in this course.

If at any point in the semester you are struggling with the course load or a specific assignment, please reach out to me for a meeting so we can try to find a solution. Be an advocate for yourself. I can't help if I don't know there's a problem.

I also recommend taking advantage of the free counseling services and tutoring services offered by the University of Memphis. Please see below for links that could be helpful for you.

**Campus and Community Resources:** <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/>

**Resources specific to physical health and wellness:**

[Mental health Services](#)

[UofM Student Health Center](#)

[Sexual, domestic, and intimate partner violence resources](#)

**If you are affected financially because of COVID-19:**

There are many resources available through the Dean of Students including:

[Dr. Rosie Phillips Bingham Student Emergency Fund](#)

[Emergency Food Resources](#), which includes [Tiger Pantry](#)

**Academic Services:**

[Writing Center](#)

[Tutoring](#)

**Communities & Inclusion:**

[Multicultural Affairs](#)

[LGBTQ+](#)

**Grading**

Quizzes: 40%

Assignments/Discussions/Reflections/Case Studies: 50%

Project: 10%

A = 90-100%

B = 80-89%

C = 70-79%

D = 60-69%

F = 0-59%

**Other issues**

No extra credit is available.

Any written assignments will be checked for plagiarism.

**Grading Philosophy.** A=Professional quality work that could be use with little or no modification  
B=Good to excellent work and exceeds requirement, but would require revision to be used professionally  
C=Satisfactory work and adequately meets requirement, but would need significant revision  
D=Barely satisfies minimum requirement and below average quality  
F=Unsatisfactory work and does not meet minimum requirements

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

This is a tentative basic weekly schedule for topics and major assignments over the semester. If the need to modify the schedule changes, it will be announced as soon as possible. All assignments are due on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. C.T. unless otherwise noted.

### *Week 1, Jan.16-21: Welcome!*

This week you will view the Getting Started folder and the Week 1 folder and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folders.

Readings: None

Assignments: Complete Introduction Discussion Post

### *Week 2, Jan. 22-28: Crisis Management Knowledge*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

Readings: Ch 1 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

Assignments: Ch. 1 Discussion Post / Organization Selection Post

### *Week 3, Jan. 29-Feb. 4: Crisis Management Foundations*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

Readings: Ch. 2 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

Assignments: Podcast Reflection Assignment 1 (Preparation is Best Medicine)

### *Week 4, Feb. 5-11: Risk*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

Readings: Ch 4 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

Assignments: Background Research Assignment / Podcast Reflection Assignment 2 (Under Pressure)

### *Week 5, Feb. 12-18: Crisis Preparing*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

Readings: Any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

Assignments: Quiz 1

### *Week 6, Feb. 19-25: Crisis Preparing (CCP)*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

Readings: Ch 5 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

**Assignments: Risk Forecasting Assignment**

*Week 7, Feb. 26-March 3: Crisis Preparing: Putting it all Together*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Readings:** Any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

*Week 8, March 4-10: (Spring Break)*

This week is Spring Break, so enjoy it!

*Week 9, March 11-17: Crisis Mitigation*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Readings:** Any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

*Week 10, March 18-24: Recognizing Crises*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Readings:** Ch 6 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

**Assignments:** Quiz 2

*Week 11, March 25-31: Crisis Responding*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Readings:** Ch 7 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

*Week 12, April 1-7:*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Assignments:** Chapter 7 Assignment

*Week 13, April 8-14:*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Readings:** Ch 10 and any supplemental materials provided in Canvas

*Week 14, April 15-21:*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

*Week 15: Last (partial) Week of Classes, April 22-24 (Wednesday, April 24 last day of classes)*

This week you will view and complete all the content within this week's Canvas folder.

**Final:** Quiz 3, Due NLT 11:59 p.m., Wednesday April 24

## Syllabus Changes

The instructor reserves the right to make changes as necessary to this syllabus. If changes are necessitated during the term of the course, the instructor will immediately notify students of such changes by posting both notification and nature of change(s) on the course bulletin board.

## ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOMES

### Professional Values and Competencies in PBRL 4421

- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.
- Apply current 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)*

- Understand the variety of relationships between media and their audiences, including diverse audiences.
- Be sensitive to the needs of diverse and under-represented groups in programming and creating messages.
- Understand how new technology affects the media and communication.
- Understand what's involved in preparing for and communicating during a crisis.
- Identify a variety of crisis communication strategies and their effectiveness.

#### *Performance standards to be met (demonstrable skills, abilities, techniques, applied competencies)*

- Earn a passing score on periodic tests and/or exams.
- Dissect crisis communication stories and examples in the news for effectiveness in messaging, diversity, and reducing uncertainty.
- Prepare and present a crisis communication strategy and messaging for an organization.

## How assessment of student learning will be met

### *Awareness*

- Grow awareness of the variety of crisis communication strategies.
- Recognize strategies and missteps in public crisis communication cases.
- Aware of need for diversity in crisis communication.

### *Understanding*

- When example crisis communication cases/events are presented, students will be asked to not only identify crisis strategies utilized, but also to discuss whether or not they were effective.
- Discussion questions will be posed in class to stimulate critical thinking. Independent thinking is encouraged.

### *Application*

- The final project will be a mock press conference, asking students to represent one organization in a fictional crisis scenario, to craft and present messages for that organization, and to participate in the press conference as both a presenter and as a journalist asking questions.
- Review current events for crisis situations and be prepared to discuss their effectiveness relevant to course concepts.

## JOURNALISM AND STRATEGIC MEDIA POLICIES

### **Portfolio requirement**

As an undergraduate student in the Department of Journalism and Strategic Media, you are required to develop and maintain an active portfolio of your work. Portfolios begin in JRSM 3900/3905. The portfolio should contain samples of coursework and/or professional experiences and should develop as you build skills. Portfolios will undergo a final, external review while you are enrolled in your capstone course.

You may use any type of web hosting for your portfolio, but it must have an independent and professional URL. You may use any content management system, but you are encouraged to use WordPress, Wix, or Squarespace. It is also encouraged to purchase a URL if you plan to use the portfolio long term. You must keep the portfolio active for six months following graduation from the University of Memphis.

You should have a professional email address you plan to use throughout your professional life, via a common email service, such as Gmail.

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
- Professional social media links (minimum LinkedIn)

You may wish to include a blog, video reels, photograph galleries, presentations, design PDFs, audio files or writing pieces as examples of professional work. The professional work should ultimately be tailored to the career you seek after graduation. Your portfolio should show a unique blend of work.

## Email

You must have your UofM email account activated. If you are using another provider, such as Google, you are required to have all UofM emails forwarded to that account. Go to the [account management website](#) for information about implementing email forwarding. You are required to check your email daily.

## Electronic devices

Some classes require a tablet, laptop or a smartphone. Others do not. Instructors will set the policy for their specific classes.

## AI/Chat GPT

The use of artificial intelligence software, such as Chat GPT, is prohibited in some courses and required in others in Journalism & Strategic Media. Please refer to specific guidelines for this course in the course-specific part of the syllabus.

## Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory in Journalism & Strategic Media. You may be assigned a failing grade for the semester for nonattendance or habitual tardiness.

## Course repetition

Majors and minors who fail to earn the minimum passing grade (C-) in a class required by your program of study in Journalism & Strategic Media after three attempts will be dropped from the program.

You may not use or submit work from a previous course, even if it is the same course being repeated, to fulfill requirements for assignments in another course. Substantially reworking the original submission, or working with the same general idea, may be permissible upon discussion and with written approval from the professor of the current course.

## Academic integrity

The University of Memphis expects all students to behave honestly and follow the policies stated in the Student Code of Rights and Responsibilities. If you need more information about the University policy on academic integrity visit the [Office of Student Accountability's website](#).

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

Further, you are expected to comply with copyright and intellectual property laws 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 rating originality of your ideas and to evaluate proper use and assignment of sources. All creative work may be checked for policy adherence by the professor. The only exception to this policy is your online portfolio and its attendant pieces (for example, the résumé and logo). By taking this course, you agree that all assignments may undergo this review process. The

assignment may be included as a source document in Turnitin.com's restricted access database. It is solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. Assignments not submitted according to the instructor's procedures may be penalized or may not be accepted at all.

### **Online SETEs**

You are encouraged to complete the SETEs evaluation of this course. If completed, once the instructor has posted final grades, you can immediately see that grade. To access evaluation forms, log in to MyMemphis; click the "Student Pages" dropdown menu and select "My Resources" and find the SETE evaluation forms; complete an evaluation for each course listed and hit the "Submit" button at the bottom of the form. Completing the SETE will only take a few minutes. Faculty take the evaluations seriously and use them to improve courses and instructional quality. Your feedback is essential and is appreciated.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines are firm. Because Journalism & Strategic Media is a professional program, students are expected to understand and comply with deadlines. Students needing an extension on an assignment must receive approval from the instructor. Exceptions will be made for reasonable circumstances if the student notifies the instructor prior to the due date.

You may be permitted to make up missing work if it is for an absence because of illness or other catastrophic emergency, such as a death in the family that can be documented.

### **AP Style and grammar**

All written work in this class must follow the AP Stylebook and accepted rules of grammar and punctuation. You are responsible for learning these rules and checking your work for errors.

### **Disability and accommodations**

If you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability, contact Disability Resources for Students at 901-678-2880 in 110 Wilder Tower Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

### **Diversity and inclusivity**

The Department of Journalism & Strategic Media values diversity in all its forms. Some of these forms include ability, age, appearance, ethnicity, gender identity, immigration status, language, nationality, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexuality, socio-economic status, and other personal identities and experiences. As such, students are expected to participate in fostering an inclusive environment that respects the differences of others.

Students are expected to approach their work through a diverse lens. Creating messages that resonate with diverse audiences requires an understanding of a variety of perspectives, which are carried out through multiple platforms, such as digital and traditional media outlets.

The department seeks to foster healthy and positive classroom discussions and experiences. As such, faculty and students are expected to remain respectful and professional at all times.

### **Weather policy**

Always check with local media, the University of Memphis website regarding inclement weather.



## **Student support**

If you are experiencing personal or academic challenges including, but not limited to food or housing issues, family needs, or other stressors, visit the Student Outreach & Support page to learn about resources that can help: <https://www.memphis.edu/deanofstudents/crisis/index.php> or contact the Dean of Students Office at 901-678-2187, or in person in Suite 359 in the University Center for assistance. You may also talk with course instructors about the challenges you are experiencing. Instructors may be able to assist in connecting you with campus or community support.