

COM 414: Crisis Communication

Professor:
Office:
Office Hours:

Email:
Phone

Course Description

The purpose of this course is to explore the role of communication and strategic communication practices throughout the three stages of a crisis event. Broadly, we focus on the risk communication and crisis planning, crisis management and ethical response, and evaluation and organizational learning.

Course Objectives

1. Explain the three basic stages of crisis management, and the communication actions associated with each stage.
2. Explain how communication can prevent, cause, exacerbate, and assist in the recovery from a crisis.
3. Summarize the role(s) of stakeholders, including the influences of audience diversity and vulnerable populations
4. Evaluate responses past crises through case study analysis.
5. Summarize the crisis planning process.
6. Create a crisis plan for an organization.

Required Textbooks

- Coombs, T. W. (2012). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, R. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2011). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Required Readings

(These are available to you on Blackboard.)

- Fearn-Banks, K. (2011). The crisis communications plan. In K. Fearn-Banks *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (4th ed.), (pp. 301-339). New York: Routledge.
- CERT. (2012). *CERT Training Materials*. Retrieved from http://www.citizencorps.gov/cert/training_mat.shtm#CERTSM
- Seeger, M. W. (2006). Best practices in crisis communication: An expert panel process. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34(3), 232-244. doi: 10.1080/00909880600769944

Assignments

Participation

Students' active engagement in the material is essential for success in this course. Thus students must be present both physically and mentally. Students must also be prepared for class by having read the assigned material *before* class and actively engage in discussion of the material during each class period.

Discussion Questions

Responses are due each Sunday (unless otherwise specified) by 11:59 pm (See BB for details.). On the 'Discussions' link in BB, post *two thought provoking* discussion questions or points of contention *and* a paragraph response or reflection on *each* question. Note: questions about definitions or questions answered in the readings will earn zero (0) points.

Crisis Communication Plan

(Additional details will be provided via Blackboard and discussed in class.)

Each student will write a crisis communication plan for a client of their choosing. The plan will include each of the 16 components of the plan outlined in the assignment guidelines.

Crisis Communication Plan Drafts

Students will submit drafts of different segments of the crisis communication plan throughout the semester.

Crisis Communication Plan Presentation

You and your partner will present their crisis communication plan to the class. Using PowerPoint as an Audio/Visual tool, students will explain the background of the organization, the risk assessment process, and challenges and opportunities faced by the organization for crisis prevention, planning, response, and recovery.

Exams

Students will complete two exams. Each exam will cover half the term (non-cumulative).

Point Distribution

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Total</u>
Participation	150
Discussion Questions (10 weeks worth 15 pts. each)	150
Crisis Communication Plan	250
Plan Drafts (4 sections worth 25 pts. each)	100
Plan Presentation	150
Exams (2 exams worth 100 pts. each)	200
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 1000

Grade Distribution

Grade You Want to Earn:	Points Required:
A+	967-1000
A	933-966
A-	900-932
B+	867-899
B	833-866
B-	800-832
C+	767-799
C	733-766
C-	700-732
D	600-699
E	0-599

Policies & Procedures

Attendance:

Attendance is required. The only “excused” absences are:

- Religious holidays.
- University-sponsored events (i.e. athletic teams, debate and forensics, etc.).
- A documented extreme illness or emergency (i.e. car accidents, death in the family, etc.).

In all three cases, for an absence to be excused you will need to provide me with appropriate documentation. If you are going to miss class for religious holidays or university-sponsored events, please notify me at least two weeks in advance so that appropriate accommodations can be made. I will not offer make-up speeches or quizzes or accept late work unless an absence is excused.

You will find this class moves at a fast pace; thus, it benefits you to be present every time we are scheduled to meet. Attendance is mandatory and will factor into your final grade, even if it is not taken every class period. We will be engaging in a number of in-class activities for which participation points will be awarded, and students not present for those activities will not receive points. If you are absent from this class more than two class periods, then you will lose points from your participation grade.

Assignments:

All assignments, unless otherwise noted, are due at the beginning of class even if a student is absent from class or running late. In professional communication practice, an assignment or project that is not timely becomes useless, regardless of the reason. If you are ill or gone the day an assignment is due, email the assignment *before* the start of class. *Assignments turned in after the start of class will be docked a minimum of 20%. Assignments not turned in by the end of class will receive zero points. For every 24-hour period later another 10% will be deducted.*

Academic Integrity:

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Disability Resource Center:

If you are registered with the disability resource center please notify me so that I may make accommodations as needed.

Technology & Outside Work:

Use of laptops, cell phones, MP3 players, and other technology is prohibited during class time. All items must be put away and turned off when you enter class. In addition, no outside work is allowed in class (this includes homework and studying for another class). *Violation of this policy will result in dismissal from the class and forfeiture of the class activity points for the day.*

Diversity / Harassment:

All members of this class will be treated with respect. Freedom of expression requires tolerance of opinions that may be offensive to some. However, conduct which constitutes harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, color, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, age, beliefs, or disability is strictly prohibited. If you feel uncomfortable in the classroom, please let me know so it can be corrected.

**This syllabus is subject to change as necessary.*