

Seminar in Media Issues: Crisis Communication
JOUR 4800/EMC 4800
Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Cary A. Greenwood, APR, Fellow PRSA
Office: **229A** COMM
Class meeting: M-W; 12:40 p.m.-2:05 p.m.
Office hours: M-W, **9:30 a.m.**-12 p.m. or by appointment
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Prerequisite: Admission to candidacy or permission of instructor. This upper-division undergraduate course in Public Relations provides students with a seminar discussion environment for examining crisis communication strategies, tactics, and crisis management case studies.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To practice and respect freedom of expression.
- To understand the role of ethics in crisis management.
- To acquire a greater understanding how journalism and public relations converge.
- To acquire a greater understanding of diversity and cultural differences.
- To acquire a greater ability to work in groups
- To conduct critical self-evaluation
- To examine and understand the process of crisis management.
- To apply critical thinking methods when solving crisis management problems.
- To understand crisis communication theories and their applicability on crisis situations.
- To demonstrate effective writing skills appropriate in various crisis situations.
- To discover how to work with news media (e.g., media training) during and after a crisis.
- To understand and use media, technology, and other tools to provide public information.

SPECIFIC COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To understand the need for planning for crises.
- To recognize early warning signs of an impending crisis.
- To have the skills to conduct a crisis inventory.
- To know the elements of a crisis communication plan.
- To understand the role of the spokesperson, development of key messages, and identification of key publics in a crisis.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Text:

Fearn-Banks, Kathleen. (2011). *Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach*. (4th ed.) New York: Routledge.

Supplemental Materials

Attached Bibliography of selected readings
Current events

POLICIES

1. Students with disabilities: If you have a disability that may require assistance or accommodations, or if you have any questions related to any accommodation for testing, note taking, reading, etc., please speak with me as soon as possible. You may also contact the Office of Disabled Students Services (898-2783) with any questions about such services.

2. Missed Exam: Any missed test will be counted as **zero**. If a final exam is given, it cannot be made up, except in cases of unavoidable and documented emergencies. If you provide a valid written excuse **BEFORE** the exam, a make-up exam will be given at a mutually agreed upon time. In the case of emergencies, you must contact me promptly following the missed exam with a valid written excuse in order to be able to take a make-up exam. If you do not have a valid written excuse, you will NOT be allowed to make up the exam.

3. Academic Misconduct: Plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or doubling on any assignments without permissions of all professors involved will not be tolerated. Any case of academic dishonesty will be considered grounds for an automatic failing grade in this course. University policies stated in the student handbook will be followed for any offenses. Students must read and be familiar with “Avoiding Plagiarism” that is available for download at <http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/pdf/plag.pdf>. Some questions will be asked on the midterm exam to test your knowledge and understanding of the content in “Avoiding Plagiarism.” As the Web page notes, “Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own.” Whenever in doubt about what may be considered plagiarism, students must consult with the instructor. University policies stated in the student handbook will be followed for any offenses.

4. Attendance: You are expected to attend all classes. The policy for twice-a-week classes will be followed in which your final grade is lowered one letter after four absences, excused or unexcused; two letters after six absences; and seven absences will constitute an automatic "F" in the course. Frequent tardiness and leaving the class early (three times during the term) will be counted as an absence. If you are unable to attend a class, it is your responsibility to let the instructor know in advance via email, voice mail or in person.

5. Email justification for absence will not be accepted: Please be advised that the instructor

will not read any email justification for your absence. Whatever the reason, please bring a written document that can justify your absence when you come back to class.

6. Classroom behavior regulations: Any disruptive or rude behavior during lecture will not be tolerated. Should the disruptive behavior continue, the instructor is authorized to ask the student to leave the classroom, and the student may be dismissed from the course for the remainder of the semester. Inappropriate communication while class is in session – talking with other classmates while the instructor is speaking – will be warned for the first violation. A second violation will result in a 5-point deduction from the final grade. Any subsequent violation will result in the loss of a letter grade.

Please refrain from non-classroom-related computer and phone use during class time. Inappropriate use of computer or phone will be noted every time it is detected, and your final grade will be lowered by five points each time it is noted.

Assignments & Responsibilities:

A. Leading discussions (10%)

Before we study a new chapter, a pre-designated individual or group is asked to read the assigned book chapter and relevant reading materials in advance and present it at the beginning of the class. Normally it happens at Monday class.

B. Chapter discussion (30%)

After covering each week’s study materials, you are given a discussion topic and asked to write a 2-page, double-spaced discussion. Normally it happens at Wednesday class.

C. Exams (20%)

There will be two examinations during the semester. Dates are on the course calendar. Examination questions will involve book chapters, PowerPoint materials, handouts, and lectures etc. covered since the last exam. Exams will not be cumulative.

D. Homework Assignments (30%)

You are to analyze a crisis that has been in the news in the past 12 months and (a) write a 10-page paper about the topic and (b) make a 10-minute presentation to the class using PowerPoint. Specific guidelines will be given during the session.

E. Crisis Simulation (20%)

Guidelines will be given at the time.

The various projects’ weights and points used in determining your final grade are as follows:

Project	Due date	Percentage of final grade (100%)/Points
Presenter (Leading Discussion 2 times)	Each week as assigned (Mon) (10 times)	20%/200 points (100 points each)
Chapter Discussion	Each week (Wed) (10 times) 20 points each	20%/200 points

Exams (2 times)	Mid-term & Finals week	20%/200 points
Homework Assignments	Current Case Study Presentation	10%/100 points 10%/100 points
Crisis Simulation	Details presented on day	20%/200 points
Extra Credit	TBD	
Total		100%/1000 points

Grading: Your final grade will be calculated as a percentage of total class points/scores. Relative weight/value of each project or test is given above. Late assignments are not accepted.

Grades are based on points earned.

A = 1000- 900; **B +** = 899-870; **B** = 869-830; **B-** = 829-800 **C+** = 799-770; **C** = 769-730; **C-** = 729-700; **D+** = 699-670; **D** = 669-630; **D-** = 629-600; **F** = 599-0.

Borderline Final Grade: The instructor reserves the right to bump a borderline grade up or down due to the student's positive and enthusiastic attitudes towards the course and active class participation. Borderline grade cases will be determined **entirely at the discretion of the instructor.**

Crisis Simulation

This will consist of a simulation. You will be divided into teams and choose roles in a mock organization that is about to experience a negative event. A handout describing the known facts will be provided the day of the exercise.

Your team will be expected to analyze the situation, develop a strategy, and prepare to respond in a news conference in front of live cameras.

The points allotted for this assignment for grading may be earned in the following ways....

- 5% Effective decision-making, efficient use of time
- 5% Proper use of the texts, tools, technologies, and personnel
- 5% Development of appropriate messaging
- 5% Effective presentation to the media and/or other key audiences

On this day, you will be expected to dress professionally/appropriately for an appearance on camera. You will be graded as a team. Remember, during a crisis you should expect the unexpected.

Schedule [To be revised per Fall 2014 dates]

Week 1

August 26 Introduction to crisis communication. Chapter 1: What is a crisis? Current national, international, and local crises.

August 28 Chapter 1 continued: Crisis vocabulary. Five stages of a crisis. Public opinion. More current crises
Discussion paper.

Week 2

Sept. 4 Chapter 2: Crisis communication theories: Apologia Theory, Image Restoration Theory, Decision Theory, Diffusion Theory, and Excellence Theory.
Presenter for Wed., Sept. 4 _____
Discussion paper.

Week 3

Sept. 9 Chapter 3: Communication to prevent crisis. News media, internal publics, customers/consumers
Presenter for Mon., Sept. 9 _____

Sept. 11 Chapter 2 and 3 continued
Discussion paper.

Week 4

Sept. 16 Chapter 4: Communication during crisis: News media, lawyers, internal publics, external publics, the masses
Presenter for Mon., Sept. 16 _____

Sept. 18 Chapter 4 continued
Incident Command System and Job Positions
Discussion paper.

Week 5

Sept. 23 Chapter 15 and Appendices
Presenter for Mon., Sept. 23 _____

Sept. 25 Chapter 15 continued.
Crisis plan examples
Discussion paper.

Week 6

Sept. 30 Chapter 5: Social Media and Crisis Communications and Chapter 6: Rumors and Cyberspace

Presenter for Mon., Sept.30 _____

Oct. 2 Chapter 5 and 6 continued
Use of Social Media in crisis situations.
Discussion paper.

Week 7

Oct. 7 Chapter 7: Textbook Crises and Chapter 8: Culture Crises
Presenter for Mon., Oct. 7 _____

Oct. 9 Chapter 7 and 8 continued
Discussion paper.

Week 8

Oct. 14-15 Fall Break

Oct. 16 Review of case studies assignment
Mid-term exam
Discussion paper.

Week 9

Oct. 21 Chapter 9: Environmental Crisis and Chapter 10: Natural Disasters
Presenter for Mon., Oct. 21 _____

Oct. 23 Chapter 9 and 10 continued
Ships at Sea and Men in Trees: How Government Deals with Crisis
Discussion paper.

Week 10

Oct. 28 Class Meets on Own

Oct. 30 Chapter 11: Transportation Crises
Presenter for Wed., Oct. 30 _____
Review of case studies assignment
Discussion paper.

Week 11

Nov. 4. Chapter 12: Product Failure and Product Tampering
Presenter for Mon., Nov. 4 _____

Nov. 6 Chapter 11 and 12 continued
Case Studies Due
Discussion paper.

Week 12

Nov. 11 Chapter 13: Death and Injury
Presenter for Mon., Nov. 11 _____

Nov. 13 Chapter 13 continued
Discussion paper.

Week 13

Nov. 18 Chapter 14: Individuals in Crisis
Presenter for Mon., Nov. 18 _____

Nov. 20 Chapter 14 continued
Case Study Presentations and Discussion

Week 14

Nov. 25 Case Study Presentations and Discussion

Nov. 27 Briefing for Crisis Simulation
Review of Incident Command System and Job Positions

Week 15

Dec. 2 Crisis Simulation

Dec. 4 Last Day of Class: Debriefing, Peer Evaluations, Course Evaluations

Dec. 6-12 Final Exam (TBD)

Bibliography for Additional Readings

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