

CM 460: Crisis Communication
Ms. Nicole McDavid
The University of Alabama in Huntsville

Required Text and Readings

Coombs, W.T. (2019). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding*. (5th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Students should be critical researchers and readers, looking over some or all of the following sources: PRWeek, The Holmes Report, IPR Research Letter, O'Dwyer's Daily, PR News, AdAge Daily, Adweek, and any other relevant publications and sites that cover aspects of PR business. There is also a linked on-going page of crisis articles.

Course Description: This course focuses on the steps of crisis and issue management. During a time where companies face instant and intense scrutiny, it is imperative to know how to use effective crisis management. The course will be reflective of the crisis management process, but will also include in-depth analysis of current crisis situations. By the conclusion of the course, participants should have developed a deeper understanding of the crisis communication and accompanying theories.

Course Objectives: Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain how communication can prevent, cause, accelerate, and assist in the recovery from a crisis event.
2. Perform a risk assessment and develop a crisis communication plan.
3. Identify and select relevant communication theories to fit a crisis situation.
4. Assess a crisis communication response for adherence to best practices in risk and crisis communication and critically analyze the ethical, cultural and social implications of the case.

National Communication Association Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOCs):

- **LOC #2: Employ Communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts**
- **LOC #3: Engage in Communication inquiry**
- **LOC #4: Create messages appropriate to audience, purpose, and context**
- **LOC #6: Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals**

Course Evaluation

The evaluation of coursework will connect to the following groups, which will make up the final grade in the course. This coursework includes:

Case Study Paper (15%)

The case study paper will provide an opportunity to explore a crisis and outline it through a case study. In the summary you will describe the situation including where you learned of it (with proper citation), organization(s)/ individual(s) involved, current status, key issues, and your assessment of the response thus far. You must use at least three references in your summary and cite them properly according to APA. You must also specifically identify a communication theory/concept from the text and assess its potential use in the crisis response.

Guest Lecture Reflection (25%)

Select one of the included guest lectures to reflect upon. The guest lecture reflection should connect to both the textbook chapter that correlates AND to the readings provided by the guest lecturer. Simply summarizing the

information from the guest lecture will result in a ZERO on the assignment. There should be a balance of the application of the textbook/readings (**with APA Style to the textbook**) and the guest lecture, and it should provide appropriate context to connect the ideas.

Crisis Management Team Project and Presentation (25%)

The semester long project will require teams to provide appropriate elements a client would use before, during, and after a crisis. A crisis management plan (CMP) is a document that outlines the processes an organization will use to respond to a critical situation that would negatively affect its profitability, reputation or ability to operate. Crisis management planning spans preparation, development of processes, and testing and training.

Assignments and Discussions (25%)

There will be several smaller assignments and discussions throughout the semester. Full details on each assignment and discussion are within the online course. These assignments will include:

- Creating a social media dashboard
 - Research an Instagram (or other picture social media account) account, and create a “dashboard” as outlined in Coombs’ (2019) text. Sharing four to five images from the account you will consider the impact of the images either positively or negatively and analyze areas for potential crises to arise.
- Audience analysis, presenting, and crisis response
 - Watch an included video report on a crisis situation and discuss through the online forum with classmates how knowing your audience connects to both presenting successfully and successfully managing crisis response.
- Strategies in enterprise risk management
 - Using Chris Davenport’s Ted Talk on risk management, use the four steps in the process to look at how an organization can also avoid potential crisis risk situations.
- Avoiding the mum effect
 - Read Sutton’s (2010) article “The Mum Effect and Filtering in Organizations: The "Shoot The Messenger" Problem” and discuss through the online forum with classmates the connection to real world organization’s issues with the Mum Effect.

Final Exam (10%)

- There will be an online final exam based on the course discussion, chapter readings, and additional readings for the course.

Course Schedule

The course schedule is subject to change as needed during the semester. Students will be notified of changes in class and through the weekly online announcement.

Date	Topics Discussed	Chapters, Articles, or Items to Read	Guest Speaker	Items that are Due
Week 1	Course Introduction	Course Syllabus		

Week 2	A Need for More Crisis Management Knowledge	Chapter 1		Creating a social media dashboard due
Week 3	Risk as the Foundation for Crisis Management and Crisis Communication	Chapter 2 Part I (page 19-26)	University Professor on Rhetorical Approaches to Crisis Communication	
Week 4	Risk as the Foundation for Crisis Management and Crisis Communication Continued	Chapter 2 Part II (page 26-31)	Marketing Director Local Hospital Foundation	Strategies in enterprise risk management due
Week 5	The Crisis Mitigation Process: Building Crisis Resistant Organizations	Chapter 3 Part I (page 33-42)	Public Relations Director for City Public Library	Guest lecture reflection due
Week 6	The Crisis Mitigation Process: Building Crisis Resistant Organizations Continued	Chapter 3 Part II (page 42-55)	Regional Land Trust Director	Avoiding the Mum effect due
Week 7	Crisis Preparing Part I	Chapter 4		Case study paper due
Week 8	Crisis Preparing Part II	Chapter 5		
Week 9	Recognizing Crises	Chapter 6 Part I (page 107-116)	University Professor on Rethinking Crisis Communication in Response to Racial Incidents on College Campuses	Guest lecture reflection due
Week 10	Recognizing Crises Continued	Chapter 6 Part II (page 116-127)		
Week 11	Crisis Responding	Chapter 7 Part I (page 129-142)	Vice President of Marketing and Communications at Local Chamber of Commerce	

Week 12	Crisis Responding Continued	Chapter 7 Part II (page 142-162)	University Professor on Cultural Competence in Crisis Response	Guest lecture reflection due
Week 13	Postcrisis Concerns	Chapter 8 Part I		
Week 14	Postcrisis Concerns Continued	Chapter 8 Part II	University Chief of Police	Audience analysis, presenting, and crisis response due
Week 15	Crisis Management Team Presentations			Crisis management team project due
	Final Exam			