COMM451 Risk and Crisis Communication

Fall, 2019 Online

Instructor:	Dr. Xun Zhu (Joe)
Office:	Columbia Hall 2370K
Office Hours:	Because this course meets solely online, office hours are available by appointment and conducted via phone or skype.
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Course Description Effective communication following crisis often presents the first, and perhaps the most critical, opportunity for minimizing the impact of damage. This course is devoted to introducing the class members to communication theories and methods of risks and crisis management. Throughout the semester, we will cover many types of risks and crisis including, for example, natural disasters, technology and system failures, health emergency, and humanitarian crisis. The course will consist of three sections, following three stages of crisis communication management processes: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. We will discuss unique goals, challenges, and strategic practices in each stage. Special attention will be given to the application of course concepts to real-world issues. For this reason, we will use a case-study approach throughout.

Course Objectives By the end of the semester each student should:
- *Recognize* the unique goals and challenges associated with each stage of crisis communication management
- *Describe* major theories concerning risk and crisis management
- *Evaluate* a crisis communication response and its social, cultural, and ethical implications
- *Develop* a risk assessment and communication plan in adherence to theory-driven practices
- *Engage in* intellectual conversation, *defend* a position, and *articulate* arguments

For me, I expect to learn more about risk and crisis communication through my interaction with class members.

Course Materials
1. Required:
   - Coombs, T. W. (2015). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
   - Additional readings or materials posted on Blackboard (Course materials will be posted on Blackboard every Wednesday at noon).
2. Recommended: (The following materials are not required and will not be covered in the courses. Rather, they are recommended for your future readings if you develop further interests in risk and crisis communication)

➢ American Psychological Association. (2009*). Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed.). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

➢ Fearn-Banks, K. (2017). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (5th ed.), New York, NY: Routledge.

➢ Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2013). *Theorizing crisis communication*. Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons.

Course Assessment

Grade Composition			
Assignments	**Opportunities**	**Points**	**%**
Plagiarism Training	One opportunity	—	—
Student-created test questions	10 opportunities (15 pts each)	150	15%
Digital participation	10 opportunities (10 pts each)	100	10%
Case study assignments	3 assignments (150 pts each)	450	45%
Exams	2 exams (150 pts each)	300	30%
TOTAL		1000	100%

Final grades will be computed based on the following point totals:

A = 900-1000 pts
B = 800-899 pts
C = 700-799 pts
D = 600-699 pts
F = 599 pts or below

Note: I do not round grades up on either individual assignments or final grades. This decision is precisely due to the difficulties of drawing a line (e.g., Why is it legitimate to round up 89.9% to 90% but not bump 89.8% to 90%?).

Course Assignments The following description presents a belief introduction to assignments, presentations, and exams required for this course. The specific description for each of them will be detailed throughout the class.

  Plagiarism training module. Department of Communication at the UND is committed to promoting scholarly integrity. To help you achieve that goal, you will be asked complete (or verify that you have previously completed) training in how to avoid plagiarism. You can complete this training by logging onto www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html. You are required to complete this training even if you may have received other plagiarism training. Once completed, please upload the completion certificate to the course's Blackboard site. Completion of this training will be necessary to pass the course. That is, failure to document

that you have completed the training will result in the grade of Incomplete (unless you are earning a D or F; those grades will be posted). Completion of the training will not affect your total score in the course. Upon the completion of the plagiarism training module, you must understand that there is no legitimate excuse for committing intentional or unintentional plagiarism. It is also expected that you will do everything you can to avoid committing academic dishonesty. If you are not clear whether or not certain practices are violations of academic dishonesty, please do not hesitate to email me, come to the office hours, or make an appointment for discussion.

Student-created test questions. Exams can be difficult, but writing a good exam can be as difficult as taking one. While instructors typically write the test questions for students, such practices have benefits for students as well. Research showed that students develop a better understanding of course content and feel less anxious about the exam if they learn how to create exam questions. Hence, each week, you will create and submit five test questions relevant to the readings of the week. ***The questions should be multiple choices (i.e., each with four possible answers).*** For each question, you will provide the correct answer and a brief explanation. Notice that simply say "see page 3 in the textbook" is not a good explanation. Then you will answer another student's questions and provide constructive feedback. The test questions should be directly relevant to the reading of the week. You should post your test questions on the Blackboard by the end of each Friday and provide your feedback no later than 8 am the following Monday. *Late posts of questions (10 pts) or responses (5 pts) will result in a loss of weekly points for the corresponding category.*

Digital participation. You will participate digitally throughout the semester. Each week you will need to post the link to one article relevant to the concepts covered in the readings of that week. Along with the article, you will write a paragraph detailing what the article is about and how it is relevant to the readings of the week. Also, you will need to read one article posted by another class member and write a brief paragraph of your thoughts, reflections, or critique. You are expected to post the article link on Blackboard by the end of each Friday, and you need to post your comments on the article of your choice no later than 8 am the following Monday. *Late posts of the article (5 pts) or comments (5 pts) will result in a loss of digital participation points for the corresponding category.*

Case study assignments. Throughout the semester, you will complete three case studies that are designed to help you apply the theories and research covered in class to real-world problems. The specific requirements for each assignment and grading rubric will be provided in separate handouts later. But in general, you are expected to submit a written report that accurately describes one or two theories, articulates your analysis, and offers theory-guided critique and recommendations. Each assignment is worth 150 points in total.

Non-cumulative exams. Two exams will cover materials in the assigned readings, lectures, slides, student-created test questions, digital participation, and case-study assignments. The exam will be open-book, which means that you are allowed to refer to your textbook or other learning materials and you do NOT need a proctor. However, collaboration is not allowed for the exams and you are expected to complete them independently. Before each exam, there will be a review session where I will help you familiarize the types of questions to be asked in the exam.

Course Policies

Scholarly integrity. All students are subject to the University of North Dakota Code of

Student Life, including, but not limited to, issues of academic dishonesty. For more information, see https://www1.und.edu/code-of-student-life/appendix-b.cfm#2

Deadlines. All assignments must be submitted to the Blackboard. ***Please note that all the deadlines for assignment submission are in Central Standard Time (CST).*** In general, a 20% penalty will be given to each day the assignment is turned in late. However, late submission will not be penalized for unavoidable or legitimate circumstances, which must be properly documented. If certain deadline conflicts with religious observance, please notify me of your schedule during the first two weeks of the semester. I may allow for makeup exams if you have a legitimate and verifiable excuse at my discretion (e.g., a family or medical emergency with proper documents, and a university-sanctioned event), AND if you contact me for approval before the exam. No make-up opportunities will be provided for student-created test questions, digital participation, reaction essays, and research participation.

Office hours. Even if this is an online course, I encourage you to take full advantage of office hours. You are welcome to make an appointment for discussion through skype or phone at the mutually agreed time. *You do not need a crisis to use office hours.* Instead, you can use them to ask questions about course materials specifically, or communication in general, to get additional reading materials, and to ask for clarification on the assignments.

Course Citizenship. You are expected to be polite and respectful in your responses to others' ideas, even if you may disagree. One way to sharpen your communication skills and have your voice heard is to provide constructive feedback on your classmates' ideas and presentations both online and offline.

Teaching style. While I make every effort to accommodate all different learning styles in class, I tend to have a Facilitator teaching style, which takes a "student-centered learning" approach. Students who are "independent, active, collaborative learners thrive in this environment." If you are interested in gaining a better understanding of yourself as a learner, please refer to the Learning Style Inventory at https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/IDEAS%202014%20Handouts/LearningStyleInventory.pdf

Student resources. To get confidential guidance and support for disability accommodation requests, students are expected to register with DSS at www.UND.edu/disability-services/, 180 McCannel Hall, or 701.777.3425. You could access to resources for helping students in distress through the UND Cares program (https://www1.und.edu/student-affairs/student-rights-responsibilities/care-team.cfm)

Resources

Technical requirements/assistance. For technical assistance, please contact UND Tech Support at 701-777-2222. For a list of Technical Requirements, please visit the website. Visit techsupport.und.edu for their hours, help documents and other resources. To succeed in this course, at a minimum, you should be able to: 1) Navigate in and use basic Blackboard functions; 2) Download and open electronic documents; 3) Create, save, and upload/attach electronic documents; 4) Send, receive, and manage email.

Access and navigation. This course was developed and will be facilitated by utilizing Blackboard. To get started with the course, please go to http://blackboard.und.edu. You will need your NDUS.Identifier, Username, and Password to log in to the course. If you do not know your NDUS Identifier or have forgotten your password, please go to http://www1.und.edu/uit/ndus.cfm. On the left side course menu in Blackboard, there is a

"Lessons" tab. Inside Lessons, you will find all the required readings, videos, and assignments/activities for the week. An overview of each week can be found in Blackboard under the Schedule tab.

 Announcement. Announcements will be posted in Blackboard regularly. Be sure to check the class announcements regularly as they will contain important information about class assignments and other class matters.

 Email. You are encouraged to post your questions about the course in the FAQs discussion board forum in the Blackboard site. This is an open forum in which you and your classmates are encouraged to answer each other's questions. But, if you need to contact me directly, check the Faculty tab in Blackboard or the syllabus for my contact information. I will respond back to you within 48 hours during the week and may not respond on the weekend until the next business day.

 Writing center. The Writing Center is a resource for students, faculty, and staff working on writing projects in any field and at any stage of the writing process. Located in Merrifield Hall, Room 12, the Writing Center offers free individual sessions with a writing consultant. Make an appointment online at http://writingcenter.und.edu.

 Seek help when in distress. We know that while college is a wonderful time for most students, some students may struggle. You may experience students in distress on campus, in your classroom, in your home, and within residence halls. Distressed students may initially seek assistance from faculty, staff members, their parents, and other students. In addition to the support we can provide to each other, there are also professional support services available to students on campus through the Dean of Students and University Counseling Center. Both staffs are available to consult with you about getting help or providing a friend with the help that he or she may need. For more additional information, please go to http://und.edu/und- cares/.

 Notice of nondiscrimination. It is the policy of the University of North Dakota that no person shall be discriminated against because of race, religion, age, color, gender, disability, national origin, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, marital status, veteran's status, or political belief or affiliation and the equal opportunity and access to facilities shall be available to all. Concerns regarding Title IX, Title VI, Title VII, ADA, and Section 504 may be addressed to: Donna Smith, Director of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Title IX Coordinator, 401 Twamley Hall, 701.777.4171, und.affirmativeactionoffice@UND.edu or the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. of Education, 500 West Madison, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60611 or any other federal agency.

 Reporting of sexual violence. If you or a friend has experienced sexual violence, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, or sex-based harassment, please contact UND's Title IX Coordinator, Donna Smith, for assistance: 701.777.4171; donna.smith@UND.edu; or go to http://und.edu/affirmative-action/title-ix.

Course Calendar

Week	Date	Topics	Readings	Assignments & Deadlines
1	8/26	Course introduction & A need for crisis management knowledge	Chapter 1	• Digital participation • Student test questions
2	9/2	Crisis communication in a changing media world	Chapters 2 & 3	• Digital participation • Student test questions
3	9/9	Crisis mitigation: Building a crisis resistant organization	Chapter 4	• Digital participation • Student test questions
4	9/16	Assignment I	Assignment instruction	Assignment I essay
5	9/23	Crisis Preparation	Chapter 5	• Digital participation • Student test questions
6	9/30	Selling Crisis	Chapter 7	• Digital participation • Student test questions
7	10/7	Exam I	Exam instruction	Exam I due on 8 am, 10/14
8	10/14	Risk communication in emergency management context	Blackboard	• Digital participation • Student test questions
9	10/21	Understanding risk perceptions	Blackboard	• Digital participation • Student test questions
10	10/28	Assignment II	Assignment instruction	Assignment II essay due on 8 am, 11/4
11	11/4	Principles of effective risk and crisis communication	Chapter 8	• Digital participation • Student test questions
12	11/11	Developing risk and crisis messages	Blackboard	• Digital participation • Student test questions
13	11/18	Assignment III	Assignment instruction	Assignment III essay due on 8 am, 11/25
14	11/25	Review and Thanksgiving Break		
15	12/2	Correcting misinformation in risk and crisis communication	Blackboard	• Digital participation • Student test questions
16	12/9	Post crisis concerns	Chapter 9 Exam instruction	
17	12/12	Final week: Exam 2 (Due on 8 am, 12/17)		

Important deadlines

Assignments	Deadlines
Digital Participation	Your post: 11:59 pm each Friday Comments on your peer's work: 8 am the following Monday
Student Test Questions	Your post: 11:59 pm each Friday Comments on your peer's work: 8 am the following Monday
Assignment I	8 am, 9/23
Assignment II	8 am, 11/4
Assignment III	8 am, 11/25
Exam I	8 am, 10/14
Exam II	8 am, 12/17

Notes: All the deadlines for assignment submission are in Central Standard Time (CST).