Risk Communication

Fall 2014

Tuesdays 5:30 to 8:00 p.m.

August 26 to December 16, 2014

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Course Number: JMC:5266:0EXA/019:266:EXA and EXW

Course Description:

The National Research Council (NRC) defines risk communication as "an interactive process of exchange of information and opinion among individuals, groups, and institutions." The definition includes "discussion about risk types and levels and about methods for managing risks." Specifically, this process is defined by levels of involvement in decisions, actions, or policies aimed at managing or controlling health or environmental risks.

Risk and/or crisis communication is usually a function of public relations but in order to be properly managed this communication management process must take into account all publics, the entire organization, and in some cases, the world. Many organizations have risk management positions. Those industries that come to mind are banking, information systems, healthcare, transportation and many others. Some industries run business that only focused on risk: insurance is only one example. Terms like ethics, quality control, loss prevention and liability are all terms and company divisions that deal only with risk.

No matter the business or the size of the organization, the ability to be prepared and to respond to any crisis is essential. Equal to being prepared is a well-researched crisis plan and trained organization ready for action, should it occur. Building a plan for a small or a large company requires a comprehensive study of the whole organization, from management to public constituent. This course will explore a number of ways different organizations (governmental and business) research, develop, train and respond to a variety of crises.

In this course, students will investigate numerous crisis situations and study the detailed plans that have helped organizations like the Red Cross, Center for Disease Control and Coca Cola respond, successfully.
This course will review case studies of natural disasters, corporate emergencies, cyber threats and disease outbreaks. Students will have the opportunity to hear from risk communication and media experts, and participate in simulation exercises.

These exercises will allow students to learn firsthand as they assume the role of a news reporter questioning the president of the company or the communications officer developing a speech for to president to give to investors. Students will learn the importance of a SWOT analysis, communication and vulnerability audits and the wealth of information these processes can discover.

Students will learn to develop: a risk preparedness plan, communication and organizational protocols; plans to respond to the media; write speeches for those addressing the public; develop strategic plans to rebuild customer confidence and create a crisis plan for the future.

The finished assignments from this course can be added to student professional portfolios. Students can expect to write reports in class as well as out of class. Students will be expected to participate in every course meeting in some way, whether it is through role-playing, a case discussion or as a part of a group simulation project.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

A) Understand, verify and respond to a variety of crises.
B) Perform a vulnerability, SWOT and communication audit
C) Be able to prioritize the necessary steps to manage and communicate (risk/crisis) situation
D) Develop a strategic crisis communication plan(s)
E) Develop the skills necessary manage a crisis situation
F) Develop communication messaging (for a variety of media)
G) Possess the skills to respond and manage all media and general inquiries
H) Develop a post risk/crisis communication strategy

**Course Materials:**

**Books:**


Selected Reading will be provided on ICON
Course Requirements:

Students are expected and required to attend classes regularly, participate in class discussion, and submit all assignments on time. Late submission of assignments will be penalized. See Late Submission Policy.

a) Attendance and class participation affect your grade. Total points awarded at the end of the semester. Each week we will begin our class with current examples of Risk or Crisis situations. Each one of you will need to come prepared with an example to discuss with the class. Each student will be assigned a partner who will be responsible for facilitating a discussion or initiating several questions about the current situation presented. Participation is essential for everyone. Each student will participate at least 5 times and be called on at random. 25 percent of your grade

b) In class assignments. Several times throughout the semester you will be asked to complete a report within a specific amount of time and during our class period. Due to the nature of crisis management and actual crisis situations, you will need to develop the ability to respond to situations in an instant. These assignments are designed to help you practice that skill. Each response is worth 100 points. There will be three assignments and their total scores will represent 25 percent of your grade.

c) Tests: There will be 2. They will be assigned during class and you respond in a set amount of time. They will not all be announced. Everyone will have the same opportunities and technology. 100 points each. Their total scores will represent 25 percent of your grade.

d) One final project which will be done as a team with each member having a unique role. The project will be to write a Crisis Communication plan. Both teams will present to a client and each team member will be responsible to write a section of the final written report. 100 possible points and this project will be worth 25 percent of your grade.

IN CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

1) Risk Assessment Report. This report will challenge you to take a hazard/potential crisis/potential disaster/personnel situation (which will be assigned) and identify the risks you will need to be prepared to manage. You will also be presented with a risk assessment worksheet FEMA uses. Your report should answer the following questions:
   A) What is the degree of exposure of the risk/threat/hazard? Are they differing degrees? Details.
   B) If the crisis happens, what kind of staff and responders will you need? What will they be responsible to do?
   C) Who are the stakeholders involved in the risk situation? And what do they need to know?
   D) To whom do you need to communicate? When do you make the call to engage? And what does the message say and who delivers it?
   E) What types of negative consequences could occur as a result of the hazard? How long may these consequences last?
Each section is worth 20 points, for a total of 100 points.

2) **Crisis Message Development.** Media and messaging documents. This exercise will challenge you to assume the role of Communications Vice President. In this role, a crisis has occurred (it will be presented to you in class) and you must develop the needed media materials for all those responding. You will develop media messages using the six emergency message components from the CDC, the STARCC Principles.

   A) Simple
   B) Timely
   C) Accurate
   D) Relevant
   E) Credible
   F) Consistent

Considerations: Regular media conferences? Timeline for all those involved? Etc.

Each section addressed is worth 14 points for a total of 100 points.

3) **Disaster.** You will be given an assigned situation and a specific role in the disaster. You will be evaluated on your participation and response. You must include a SWOT analysis

   a. Expression of empathy
   b. Clarification of the facts
      i. Who, what, where, when, why and how
   c. What isn’t known
   d. Process of getting answers
   e. Statement of commitment

Each section addressed is worth 20 points for a total of 100 points.

**The three written assignment scores will be added and their total sum will represent 25 percent of your grade.**

There will be 2 exams, each worth 100 points. Their sum is worth 25 percent of your grade.

4) **FINAL PROJECT**

   **Crisis Plan.** You will be assigned to write a crisis plan for a non-profit organization. You will be assigned to a team. Each member of the team will have a unique section of the plan to execute. The organization will come to class so you can learn about the organization and ask questions. Your Crisis Plan will be due on December 2. The organization will return for you to present your plans in class on December 9th.
Your plan will need to include the following (This is a list of the minimum you must include. You may wish to prepare more materials or include additional elements to your plan. It must include the roles, lines of responsibility and resources. It should be the “go to” document.)

1. Situational Analysis/SWOT Analysis
2. Prepared documents and information
3. Organizational list
4. Key Publics/Stakeholders/Partners
5. Crisis Communication team
6. Spokesperson
7. Media contacts
8. Emergency contacts/directories – comprehensive government, hospital, systems back-up, real estate etc.
9. Web information – blogs, social, e-commerce, related URL’s
10. Crisis Control Center/equipment/supplies
11. Prodomes – other often tragic complications
12. Post crisis strategy

Teams and Team roles will be determined at the beginning of the semester and will be based on the size of the final class. Each section will be worth 5 points each for a total of 60 points. Your team will be given a presentation grade of 30 points; each member of each team will grade each other’s work and contribution for 15 points and the client will also award each group 15 points for a total of 100 points total and 25 percent of your grade.

Grading and grade scale:

A: 92-100
A-: 90-91
B+: 89
B: 82-88
B-: 80-81
C+: 79
Etc.

Reading schedule and outline

August 26       Introduction of Course
Crisis and Risk Defined

Chapters 1 & 2 Barton Book

Sept. 2

Chapters 3 & 4 Barton Book

Sept. 9

Chapters 1 – 2 Fearn-Banks Book

Risk Assessment Report Assigned

Sept. 16

Chapter 5 Barton Book

Crisis Plan Assigned - Meet the Non-Profit

Chapter 3 Fearn-Banks Book

Risk Assessment Report Due

Sept. 23

Chapter 6 Barton Book

Chapter 4 Fearn-Banks Book

Sept. 30

Chapters 5 & 6 Fearn-Banks Book

Cyber, Social and Rumors

Oct. 7

Chapters 7 & 8 Fearn-Banks Book

Crisis and Cases

Crisis Message Development Report Assigned

Oct. 14

Chapters 9 & 10 Fearn-Banks Book

Crisis Message Development Report Due

Environmental and Natural Disasters

Oct. 21

Chapters 7 & 8 Barton Book

Disasters continue

Team conferences with instructor

Oct. 28

Chapters 9 - 11 Barton Book

Nov. 4

Chapters 11 & 12 Fearn-Bank Book
Disaster Assignment

**Nov. 11**

- Chapters 13 & 14  
  Fearn-Banks Book
- Chapters 12 – 15  
  Barton Book

Disaster Assignment Due

**Nov. 18**

- Chapters 15 - 19  
  Barton Book
- Chapter 15  
  Fearn-Banks Book

**Nov. 25**

Thanksgiving Break No Class

**Dec. 2**

Crisis Plans Due

Exam

**Dec. 9**

Presentations to Client  
Last Class

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**Attendance and participation:**

You are expected to attend class regularly. Attendance will be checked each class period. I will need to know if you are going to miss a class prior to the class. You are expected to do the reading assigned and be able to comment on the cases and content presented. All work must be turned in on time, regardless of whether you are in class or not. Not only are you required to be present for each class you are also expected to actively participate in class discussions. Everyone will be expected to respect all classmates’ opinions.

**Course Policies:**

**Expectations:** Class periods will be used for lecture and discussion related to the course. Most of the work on your projects and presentation will need to be completed outside of our class time. The CLAS student workload guidelines advise that each semester hour of class should entail around two hours each week of outside preparation for the average student. This means that a three semester hour course like this one, students should expect 8 hours of outside work per week on average, for a total of 12 hours including class time.

**In-class behavior:**

It goes without saying that you are expected to behave in a professional manner throughout the course with your instructors and peers. This includes:

- a. coming to class on time and not leaving early;
- b. turning off your cell phone or putting it on silent/vibrate;
- c. refraining from the use of the computer for purposes other than the course. This
means not checking Face book, e-mail, Twitter, texting, etc. during class!

Language and style in graded work:
We are in the journalism school, so spelling, grammar, clarity and style, and punctuation are part of your paper grades. I cannot stress enough the importance of good writing. Writing skills are transferable to any field of work/study and will always be beneficial to you regardless of your professional plans for the future.

Online communication:
I am happy to answer any e-mails with questions, comments or concerns. However, they should be sent through your Hawk e-mail account and I will respond only to that account, as outlined in the CLAS policy. I will respond to your e-mail in a timely manner (within 24 – 48 hours). On weekends, e-mail responses might be slower. I expect to see proper e-mail etiquette. Please use professional netiquette when you are emailing me

I do not consider Face book an appropriate place to interact with students; therefore I do not accept students’ friend requests there. This is a blanket policy for all and is not an indication of my attitude towards a particular person. However, you can connect with me on LinkedIn.

Late Submission Policy:
All assignments have firm due dates. No extensions will be given unless there are extenuating circumstances. In unique cases, if you have spoken with me before an assignment is due, I will consider other arrangements. Assignments turned in late will be marked down a letter grade for every day the assignment is late. Therefore, papers that would have earned an A or 100 to 95 percent, if they would have been turned in on time, would be graded a B or between 90 – 85 percent, after being late one day, and a C between 79 – 75 percent for two days, etc.

Administrative Home

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall, or see the CLAS Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook.

Electronic Communication

University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences (Operations Manual, III.15.2, k.11).
Accommodations for Disabilities

A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. See [www.uiowa.edu/~sds/](http://www.uiowa.edu/~sds/) for more information.

Academic Honesty

All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](#): "I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty." Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

CLAS Final Examination Policies

The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the fifth week of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint

Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Understanding Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI [Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment](#) for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting Safely to Severe Weather

In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more
information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Department of Public Safety website.

*These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and The University of Iowa Operations Manual.