

Loyola University Chicago
School of Communication
COMM 436 Crisis and Risk Communication
Fall Semester 2020

Class Dates: Thursdays, August 27 through December 3

Class Time: 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

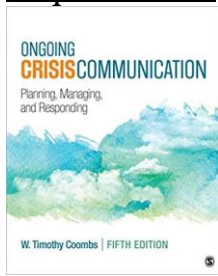
Location: Online, via Zoom

Office Hour: By appointment

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Required Texts



Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing and Responding

5th edition, 2019

W. Timothy Coombs

Sage Publications

ISBN: 978-1544331959

The New Rules of Crisis Management

Edited by Ron Culp, produced by Public Relations Society of America

RockDove Solutions

(Provided by the instructor)



Highly Recommended Text:



Crisis Ready: Building an Invincible Brand in an Uncertain World

Melissa Agnes

Mascot Books

ISBN: 978-1-68401-413-2

In addition, it is important to keep up with the news of the day, particularly business news. Your instructor reads these publications regularly: *Chicago Tribune*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Online news includes CNN, *PRSA Issues and Trends*, *Ad Age*. Additional readings will also be provided or recommended by the instructor as needed.

Course Description

How an organization communicates during a crisis can make or break its crisis response and potentially impact its survival. As a result, one of the most important roles of strategic communicators is helping organizations predict, plan for, identify, manage and recover from crisis. This course explores the practical and theoretical aspects of crisis communication through case studies, class exercises and guest speakers. It also examines how and why communication helped or harmed real-world crises. Students will practice techniques for effective communication by creating and evaluating crisis scenarios, assessing risk perceptions, developing a crisis communication plan and testing crisis plans.

Learning Objectives

Through the analysis of current communications situations and case studies of past communications situations, this course will equip participants to:

- assess business risk
- define special communication situations (i.e. ongoing issue, crisis)
- determine key audience concerns: employees, managers, operations personnel, executives, consumers/customers, investors, regulators and others
- define and develop messages, tools and processes for managing special communication and crisis situations
- conceive an overarching communications approach to special/crisis situations
- apply judgment in a special communication situation (i.e., crisis)

Written Assignments

Clear, concise writing is a key communications skill and is expected in this class. Assume an executive level audience (CEO, CMO, CFO, other C-level) for all assignments in this course. In addition to meeting the requirements of assignments, your instructor will automatically deduct at least one point for the following errors in grammar and writing: misspelled words, incomplete sentences or sentences that are poorly written and factual errors. Deductions will increase for errors repeated in subsequent assignments. Best advice: Consult the *Associated Press Stylebook*, use spell check and ask classmates to review your work before submitting assignments.

Class sessions and attendance

The instructor expects your attendance at all class sessions. **Class sessions will be recorded and posted on Sakai.** The instructor will also keep track of attendance. Missing class sessions can result in your missing in-class exercises or homework given in your absence. Making up missed work may not be possible. If you will be absent, please contact the instructor in advance about your absence.

Absences on the day of an impromptu, graded, real-time situation cannot be made up.

Original Work

Originality is the hallmark of the public relations industry. Plagiarism is a serious matter, and you risk getting a grade of F for serious infraction. Please be aware of the strong university sanctions against plagiarism. Consult the *School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity* for more information (below.) Best advice: Always credit sources and cite direct quotations in text properly.

Deadlines

Strategic communications professionals must always meet deadlines. Assignments are due as indicated in the assignment. **Late assignments will not be accepted.** If you must miss a class, your assignment must still arrive on time.

Important dates

September 6: Last day to drop classes without a grade of "W"

October 30: Last day to withdraw from classes with a grade of "W"

December 10: Final exam due

Grading

Weekly discussion of news articles (4 points each, 52 total points): Each student will write a one-page discussion of a current news article that relates to the topic of crisis management/communication. Each report must include:

- a summary of the issue described in the article (1 point)
- 2 to 3 specific points about how and why this crisis occurred and what the organization did to resolve it (2 points)
- what you learned about crisis and/or risk management (1 point)

Include a link to the story or correct references. At least half of the articles must relate to a crisis inside the United States and others must relate to a crisis outside the United States. **Due at noon in the dropbox each class day (except Thanksgiving, Nov. 26).**

In-class exercises (3 points each, up to 15 total points): We will practice planning/writing various exercises in class. The instructor will award up to three points per in-class assignment, to be done in class at various times throughout the semester.

Guest professor presentation (two presentations per student, 25 points each/50 total points):

Each student will present to the class on a crisis communication topic of her/his choosing. One topic should concern an international crisis issue and the other, domestic. Students should present for no more up to 15 minutes. The content of these presentations shall include:

- an explanation of the issue and what happened
- a summary of specific communication work done to resolve or respond to the crisis/issue
- an explanation of any follow-up work being done
- leading the class in a discussion of the topic
- highlighting important learnings for you as a result of this crisis/issue and the response

Students will be graded on presentation contents, slides, learnings and leadership of class discussion. The instructor will provide a sign-up sheet for presentations. **September 24 to November 19.** **Submit slides in the dropbox by noon the day after your presentations.**

Crisis teams/talking points document (20 points): Each student will prepare a briefing document containing a plan for a crisis management team, talking points and other important information to help address a scenario the professor will provide. The briefing document should be addressed to a C-suite-level leader, who will serve as the communicator with the media and the public. **Due October 8, noon.**

Written statements (two statements, 8 points each, 16 total points) Based on a discussion in class, each student will prepare written statements addressing a scenario provided by the professor. The first statement should be written in the form of an email message that will the CEO of an organization will send key constituents and staff. The second written statement is a statement to be used in response to media inquiries. **Due October 29.**

Crisis communication plan (60 points): Each student will prepare a detailed communication plan in response to scenario provided by the professor. Students should follow the outline presented in class. **Due November 27.**

Final exam (40 points): The final exam will include multiple choice and short answers, covering key concepts discussed in the class, as well as ask you to respond to a scenario provided by the professor. **Due December 10.**

Tips for succeeding in the course

- Attend and participate in class.
- Take responsibility: use all tools, resources and publicly available information to enhance your learning experience inside and outside of class.
- Read the textbook and follow the news.
- **Proof and edit** your work. Draft, re-write, edit, and edit again if necessary before finalizing an assignment. Follow AP style. Use spell check. **(Note: I take one point off each in any written document that has the following: a misspelled word, a factually incorrect statement or incoherent writing.)**
- Don't try to do too much at once. Keep up with the work and the readings.
- Help each other.

Class Schedule

The following is a working schedule of how we will review the textbook and other supplemental readings. Classes will consist of a mix of lectures, Q&A, presentations and analysis, possible group work and occasional guest speakers who specialize in some facet of the public relations profession.

Class schedule (subject to possible changes)

August 27, class #1

- Instructor and class introductions
- Course overview
- Begin: What is a crisis/types of crises?
- Why is crisis management important?

September 3, class #2

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 1, Need for Crisis Management Knowledge, pgs.1-18
 - Crisis management defined
 - Three-stage approach
 - Crisis leadership
- *New Rules*: Digital Age Demands pgs. 5-9
- **News article due, noon**

September 10, class #3

- Influence of social media on crises
- Ongoing CC: Chapter 2, Risk as the Foundation for Crisis Management and Crisis Communication, pgs. 19-31
 - Types of crisis management responses
- New Rules: Adjusting for the Digital Age, pgs. 10-16
- **News article due, noon**

September 17, class #4

- Ongoing CC: Chapter 2, Risk as the Foundation for Crisis Management and Crisis Communication (cont'd), pgs. 19-31
 - Types of crisis management responses
- *New Rules*: Chapter 2, Considerations for Professional Services Firms, pgs. 17-23
- **News article due, noon**

September 24, class #5

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 3, Crisis Mitigation Process, pgs. 33-55
 - Crisis prevention programs
- **Begin in-class presentations**
- **News article due, noon**
- **Begin work on crisis team/talking points document**

October 1, class #6

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 4, Crisis Preparation: Part I pgs. 57-86
 - Diagnosing vulnerabilities
 - Developing crisis management teams
 - Developing spokespersons
- **News article due, noon**
- **Crisis team/talking points document due October 8, noon**

October 8

NO CLASS

- **News article due, noon**
- **Crisis team/talking points document due at noon**

October 15, class #7

- Developing written statements for crises (internal and external)
 - Elements of written statements
 - Distribution of written statements
- **Discuss written statements assignment**
- **News article due, noon**

October 22, class #8

- Written statements (cont'd)

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 5, Crisis Prevention II, pgs. 87-106
 - Developing a crisis plan
 - Review of the crisis communication system
 - Competencies
- *New Rules*: Chapter 6, The Importance of Data and Analytics, pgs. 44-48
- **News article due, noon**
- **Written statements due October 29, noon**

October 29, class #9

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 5, Crisis Prevention II (cont'd), pgs. 87-106
 - Developing a crisis plan
 - Review of the crisis communication system
 - Competencies
- *New Rules*: Chapter 8, Creating an Effective Crisis Preparedness Plan, pgs. 57-62
- **News article due, noon**
- **Written statements due at noon**

November 5, class #10

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 6, Recognizing Crises, pgs. 107-127
 - Selling a crisis
 - Information gathering
- **News article due, noon**
- **Discuss development of crisis management/communication plans**

November 12, class #11

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 7, Crisis Response, pgs. 129-162
 - Form of the crisis response
 - Strategic focus
 - Crisis response strategies
- *New Rules*: Chapter 3, Leveraging Employees During a Crisis, pgs. 24-31
- **News article due, noon**

November 19, class #12

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 7, Crisis Responding, pgs. 129-162
 - Form of the crisis response
 - Strategic focus
 - Crisis response strategies
- *New Rules*: Legal Considerations for Crisis Communication, Chapter 4, pgs. 32-37
- **News article due, noon**
- **End in-class presentations**
- **Crisis management plan due at noon, Friday, November 27**

November 26

NO CLASS -- THANKSGIVING

- **Crisis management plan due at noon, Friday, November 27**

December 3, class #13

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 8, Post-crisis Concerns, pgs. 163-186
- Evaluation
- Organizational memory
- Memorials and shrines
- *New Rules*: Chapter 7, Crisis Implications for Brands, pgs. 49-56
 - Technology
 - Globalization
- **News article due, noon**
- **Discussion of final exam requirements**

December 10

Final exam due, 8 p.m.

Final Grades/Point Totals

A 233-250	C 183-189
A- 225-232	C- 175-182
B+ 215-224	D+ 168-174
B 208-214	D 159-167
B- 200-207	D- 150-158
C+ 190-199	F Below 150

Policy Statements:

- **School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity**
- **Students with Disabilities**
- **Managing Life Crises and Finding Support**

School of Communication Statement on Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate truth as it is honestly perceived. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty can take several forms, including, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, copying another student’s work, and submitting false documents. These examples of academic dishonesty apply to both individual and group assignments.

Academic cheating is a serious act that violates academic integrity. Cheating includes, but is not limited to, such acts as:

- Obtaining, distributing, or communicating examination materials prior to the scheduled examination without the consent of the teacher;
- Providing information to another student during an examination;
- Obtaining information from another student or any other person during an examination;
- Using any material or equipment during an examination without consent of the instructor, or in a manner which is not authorized by the instructor;
- Attempting to change answers after the examination has been submitted;

- Taking an examination by proxy. Taking or attempting to take an exam for someone else is a violation by both the student enrolled in the course and the proxy.
- Unauthorized collaboration, or the use in whole or part of another student's work, on homework, lab reports, programming assignments, and any other course work which is completed outside of the classroom;
- Falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines; or
- Any other action that, by omission or commission, compromises the integrity of the academic evaluation process.

Plagiarism is a serious violation of the standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism is the appropriation of ideas, language, work, or intellectual property of another, either by intent or by negligence, without sufficient public acknowledgement and appropriate citation that the material is not one's own. It is true that every thought probably has been influenced to some degree by the thoughts and actions of others. Such influences can be thought of as affecting the ways we see things and express all thoughts. Plagiarism, however, involves the taking and use of specific words and ideas of others without proper acknowledgement of the sources, and includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Submitting as one's own material copied from a published source, such as Internet, print, CD-ROM, audio, video, etc.;
- Submitting as one's own another person's unpublished work or examination material;
- Allowing another or paying another to write or research a paper for one's own benefit; or
- Purchasing, acquiring, and using for course credit a pre-written paper.
- Submitting the same work for credit in two or more classes, even if the classes are taken in different semesters. If a student plans to submit work with similar or overlapping content for credit in two or more classes, the student should consult with all instructors prior to submission of the work to make certain that such submission will not violate this standard.

The above list is in no way intended to be exhaustive. Students should be guided by the principle that it is of utmost importance to give proper recognition to all sources. To do so is both an act of personal, professional courtesy and of intellectual honesty. Any failure to do so, whether by intent or by neglect, whether by omission or commission, is an act of plagiarism. A more detailed description of this issue can be found at

https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Plagiarism or any other act of academic dishonesty will result minimally in the instructor's assigning the grade of "F" for the assignment or examination. The instructor may impose a more severe sanction, including a grade of "F" in the course. All instances of academic dishonesty must be reported by the instructor to the Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication. Instructors must provide the appropriate information and documentation when they suspect an instance of academic misconduct has occurred. The instructor must also notify the student of their findings and sanction.

The Associate and Assistant Deans of the School of Communication may constitute a hearing board to consider the imposition of sanctions in addition to those imposed by the instructor, including a recommendation of expulsion, depending on the seriousness of the misconduct. In the case of multiple instances of academic dishonesty, the Dean's office may convene a separate hearing board

to review these instances. The student has the right to appeal the decision of the hearing board to the Dean of SOC. If the student is not a member of the SOC, the dean of the college in which the student is enrolled shall be part of the process. Students have the right to appeal the decision of any hearing board and the deans of the two schools will review the appeal together. Their decision is final in all cases except expulsion. The sanction of expulsion for academic dishonesty may be imposed only by the Provost upon recommendation of the dean or deans.

Students have a right to appeal any finding of academic dishonesty against them. The procedure for such an appeal can be found at:

http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicgrievance.shtml

The School of Communication maintains a permanent record of all instances of academic dishonesty. The information in that record is confidential. However, students may be asked to sign a waiver which releases that student's record of dishonesty as a part of the student's application to a graduate or professional school, to a potential employer, to a bar association, or to similar organizations.

(The School of Communication policy is based entirely on and is consistent with the Academic Integrity Policy of the College of Arts & Sciences.)

Students with Disabilities: Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Managing Life Crises and Finding Support: Should you encounter an unexpected crisis during the semester (e.g., securing food or housing, addressing mental health concerns, managing a financial crisis, and/or dealing with a family emergency, etc.), I strongly encourage you to contact the Office of the Dean of Students by submitting a CARE referral (LUC.edu/csaa) for yourself or a peer in need of support. If you are uncomfortable doing so on your own, please know that I can submit a referral on your behalf – just email me or schedule a meeting with me during office hours. To learn more about the Office of the Dean of Students, please find their websites here: LUC.edu/dos or LUC.edu/csaa. Phone 773-508-8840. Email deanofstudents@luc.edu.

Guidelines for Recording Students During Online Classes

Block Video Downloads by Students: To limit the circulation of recordings of students (e.g. recorded synchronous sessions, student presentations) beyond the classroom, and their possible use for "commercial purposes" as described in the Illinois Publicity Act, students' ability to download video recordings will be restricted beginning in Spring 2018. All systems currently used by Loyola for recording (Panopto, VoiceThread, and Zoom) will be set to prevent students from downloading videos. This will not impact students' ability to view the recordings when the student has an internet connection. If there is a need for students to download specific recordings, please contact the Office of Online Learning for guidance (online@luc.edu). Faculty retain the ability to download recordings.

Written Consent of Students: In alignment with Illinois law and the University Privacy Statement (above), instructors who wish to use an online class recording that includes student activity beyond

the class in which it was recorded may do so only with the informed written consent of the students involved or if all student activity is removed from the recording. A release form created by the Office of the General Counsel must be signed by students. We are currently working with ITS to develop a digital consent form that will allow for a student's digital signature. This will enable online students to more easily access and sign this required form. Details regarding accessing and storing written consent forms was sent to all online faculty in January 2019.