ISC 2337: Special topics: crisis communication – theories, practice and case studies

Session: Spring 2014  
Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 5.30 - 8.300 PM  
Room:  
Professor: Serge Banyongen, Phd  
Telephone:  
Office hours: By appointment  
Email: ebany077@uottawa.ca

Overview: This course introduces students to the theories and practices that allow organizations and individuals to successfully cope with the communication aspects of a crisis. It relies on a case study approach to explore crisis management principles, strategies, and tactics in multiple contexts. The course provides students insights regarding key concepts, theoretical perspectives, essential skills and abilities, and critical thinking and problem solving skills necessary for effective crisis management within organizations.

Objectives: Upon successful completion of this course, you will be able to:

- explain what crisis communication involves;  
- describe and identify different types of crisis;  
- describe the crisis management stages;  
- explain what crisis communication problems look like;  
- identify four types of crisis responses;  
- explain how to anticipate and make advanced preparations for a crisis;  
- describe the role of a crisis management team (CMT);  
- explain how to use social media to deal with a crisis;  
- explain the role of crisis communication when crafting strategic messages to a target audience;  
- explain why social media is useful during a crisis, and describe how to use social media during a crisis;  
- describe the function of a crisis communication plan (CCP);
• explain how to design and prepare a CCP;
• explain how to practice writing key messages that tell your organization story;
• explain how to incorporate key messages in online and traditional media tools;
• describe how to help management communicate truthful messages; and
• describe how to communicate to various stakeholder groups during a crisis.

**Students’ Responsibilities:** Students enrolled in this course will be expected:

• To have completed the required readings *before* attending the lectures;
• To contribute presentations based on the Sessional readings;
• To reflect critically on disputed issues; and
• To actively engage in the class discussions.

**Course Structure:** The course comprises 12 Sessional seminar sessions From May, 1st to June, 12th, 2013.

**Approach and Methodology**

The approach to the course will be participatory and interactive with lecture presentations, case studies and group discussions as well as experience sharing among the participants.

**Assessment:** Students' performance on this course is assessed in four ways:

1. **Class participation – 10% of the final grade**
   The Class sessions are a venue for exploring theories and ideas that one may find difficult, or particularly interesting. Seminars are only useful when participants come well prepared for them. This means that, at minimum, *all attending should have completed the required readings in advance.* Please do not come unprepared, and sit silently, taking notes! **Attendance is Mandatory**

2. **Crisis identification – 15% of the final grade due on May 19th at the beginning of the class**
   Students are requested to research a local, national or international crisis reported in the Medias and the communication about it, taking into account everything we have learned on this course. Prepare an analysis that will describe that crisis dynamic and outline the key lessons that can be drawn from the case.

3. **Organize a press conference on crisis – 25% of the final grade**
   The students will be asked to organize a press conference after a crisis. They will have to design media lines, as well as a news release and they will hold a 30 minutes press conference during which they will tackle the crisis responding to the Medias question after a brief statement.

4. **Write and present a Crisis communication plan – 50% of the final grade**
   Using the crisis communication plan models provided in class and in class readings or other sources as guides, Students are asked to write a crisis communication plan. The professor will provide a list of approved essay topics. The plan will be presented in class and the essay handle to the professor after the presentation.
Format
The Communication plan should:
- Have a cover page.
- Be double-spaced.
- Be typed, using *Times New Roman* 12 pt font.
- Be properly referenced using the APA referencing format
- Guidelines for using the APA referencing system are available online at:
  - [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_apa.html)

The distribution of final grades will be according to the following scale:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-89 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>75-79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>70-74%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>66-69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>60-65%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>55-59%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>50-54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>40-49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-39%</td>
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**COURSE SCHEDULE:**
Texts required readings will be post on the Blackboard course page.

**Session 1 (May 1st)**
**Introduction/Overview**

Understanding key concepts and issues


Session 2 (May 06th)
Crisis communication theories


Session 3 (May 08th)
Pre-Crisis Planning, communication and management


Session 4 (May 13th)
Crisis: the stages and dynamic


Session 5 (May 15th)
Rumor studies


Session 6 (May 19th)
The crisis and Media relations


Session 7 (May 22nd)
Crisis press conference practice exercise

Session 8 (May 27th)
Crisis communication plan


Session 9 (May 29th)
Crisis in the digital era


Session 10 (June 03rd)
From crisis to opportunity


Benoit, W. L., & Pang, A. (2008), “Crisis communication and image repair discourse”. In Tricia L. Hansen-Horn & Bonita Dostal Neff (Eds.), Public Relations: From theory to practice (pp. 244-261). Boston, MA: Pearson

Session 11 (June 05th)
Presentations
Session 12 (June 10th)
Presentations
Session 12 (June 12th)
Presentations
Useful Resources:

Journals:
- American Political Science Review
- Corporate Communications: An International Journal
- Canadian Journal of Communication
- Journal of Applied Communication Research
- Canadian Journal of Political Science
- Canadian Public Administration
- Columbia Journalism Review
- Communication Research
- European Journal of Communication
- Gazette: International Journal for Communication Studies
- Health Communications
- Information, Communication, and Society
- Information Technology and People
- Journal of Communication
- Journal of Computer Mediated Communications (available on the WWW)
- Journalism Studies
- Management Communication Quarterly
- Media, Culture and Society
- New Media and Society
- Journal of Public Relations Research
- Political Communication
- Public Relations Review
- Journal of Business and Technology Communication
- Journal of Public Relations Research

Web-Sites:
- www.journalism.org (Project for Excellence in Journalism)
- www.mediachannel.org (Global Network for Democratic Media)
- www.media-awareness.ca (Media Awareness Network)
- www.fair.org (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting)
- www.mediawatch.ca (Media Watch)
- www.freedomhouse.org (Freedom House)
- www.anti-spin.com
- http://depts.washington.edu/bennett/ (gateway to Internet sites containing useful information about the media and democracy)
- http://depts.washington.edu/ccce/Home.htm (Center for Communication and Civic Engagement)
- www.alternet.org (Program of the Independent Media Institute)
- www.indymedia.org (Independent Media Centre)
- www.pewcenter.org (Pew Center for Civic Journalism)
Study Guide:
When doing the readings, preparing for class discussions and research papers, and/or studying for literature-oriented exams there are seven key elements that need to be considered. They are:

1. What is the author’s ‘thesis statement’ or main argument?
2. What are the main or primary points made by the author to support his/her thesis statement or main argument?
3. What evidence does the author use to support the claims s/he makes (e.g. examples, statistics, theory, empirical studies, work of other authors, etc)? Be specific
4. What assumptions underpin the author’s argument?
5. What are the implications of the author’s argument?
6. How does the author’s argument differ from or parallel the claims made by other authors?
7. Are there any ideas presented, or claims made by the author, that can be applied to other contexts or settings? If not, why? If yes, give examples

Other useful information:
Please familiarize yourself with the Academic Regulations: http://ustpaul.ca/en/registrar-services-academic-regulations-undergraduate-studies_469_741.htm

Please read this information on intellectual integrity (with resources regarding plagiarism and other forms of fraud): http://ustpaul.ca/en/registrar-services-academic-fraud_1408_783.htm

For examples of plagiarism see: http://www.uottawa.ca/plagiarism.pdf

Revision of marks:
Please see the appropriate section in the academic regulations (8.10 Revision of Grades and Appeals)

Students must complete all assignments during the allocated time as per the schedule provided in this course outline, and in accordance with the final exam date. Failure to complete any of the in-class assignments will result in a mark of zero being awarded. Failure to complete either the midterm or final exam will similarly result in a zero mark.

Learning support
Students who require accommodations or academic support because of a physical or learning disability, or any condition that affects their ability to learn, are invited to register with ACCESS

SERVICE:
In person: University Centre 339
Telephone: 613-562-5976
TTY: 613-562-5214
E-mail: adapt@uottawa.ca
Web: http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/access/
Students can then meet with an Access Service specialist to identify their individual needs and to discuss appropriate interventions.

**IMPORTANT Deadlines for requesting accommodations for:**

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<tr>
<th>Quizzes, tests, mid-terms, deferrals</th>
<th>FINALS</th>
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<tr>
<td>7 day rule (excluding holidays and the day of the exam)</td>
<td>FALL SESSIONS: November 15th</td>
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<td>WINTER SESSIONS: March 15th</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SPRING/SUMMER SESSIONS: 7 day rule</td>
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http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/access/students/adapted-exam-procedures.php

**Student Success Centre (SSC)**

The Student Success Centre (SSC) is your best resource for all your academic needs. Our counsellors and student-mentors provide you with the tools and strategies to ensure that you are successful in achieving your academic, professional and personal objectives.

**Student Mentors**
A team of student-mentors is available to support you as you get acquainted with research methods at the university level. The team will share with you, through workshops, study groups or one-on-one meetings, tips, guidance and resources to help you acquire the know-how for a positive university experience.

**Academic Writing Help Centre**
Writing advisors will offer you assistance in organizing, presenting and correcting your papers and avoid plagiarism. These sessions will be offered through one-on-one meetings.

**Workshops on achieving academic success**
Workshops especially designed to address questions and concerns such as stress management, budgeting, time management, and your exam preparation are offered. Please see our student-mentors.

The Student Success Centre (SSC) is located in rooms 40 and 42 Guigues Hall.
Telephone number: (613) 236-1393, extension 2640, e-mail: redaction-writing@ustpaul.ca