Course Syllabus
COMM-4335_001 – Crisis Communication
Wednesday, 4:20-6:50pm, Island Hall 163

Dr. Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer
Office: Bay Hall 329
Hours: TR 3:30-4:30, W 2:30-4:00pm, and by appointment
Office Phone: 361-825-2273
E-mail: michelle.maresh-fuehrer@tamucc.edu

I am happy to connect with you on social media sites, but please do not ask me questions about class via social media!

Course Description
A case study approach to the study of crisis communication theory and application, whereby students are exposed to the best and worst practices of crisis communication via an analysis of recent, recognizable crises. Students learn to distinguish the various types of crises and implement effective strategies for preventing, managing, and evaluating crisis situations.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:
✓ Discuss principles and theories of crisis communication practice.
✓ Understand the elements of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis communication.
✓ Identify the similarities and differences among various types of crises.
✓ Critically examine popular crisis communication campaigns.
✓ Distinguish between effective and ineffective theories and principles based on new PR models.
✓ Analyze and write the findings of a recent crisis in a case study format.

Required Text

Course Assignments & Grade Distribution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizational History</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Assessment</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Communication Action Plan</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Plan</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection Papers</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Plan &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation (14 days at 5 points)</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Points:</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grade Calculation:
- A 90% of the total points: 639 points – 720 points
- B 80% of the total points: 568 points – 638 points
- C 70% of the total points: 497 points – 567 points
- D 60% of the total points: 426 points – 496 points
- F 50% of the total points: 000 points – 425 points

A Successful Course Experience
A successful experience in this course will depend on your individual commitment and work ethic, as well as your ability to be an “active participant observer.” I encourage all students to visit with me frequently throughout the semester, rather than waiting until the end of the semester to ask questions or express concerns. As in most courses, students should be proactive about their work and ready to discuss concepts and share examples during class. Furthermore, a professor who is familiar with their students is better able to help their students accomplish their personal goals, so make yourself known! Be known for doing good work, contributing during class discussion, and talking about your concerns, challenges, successes, and goals with me outside of class. If you have suggestions that will enrich your learning experience, please let me know.
Dropping a Course

I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this course; however, at times, events can occur that make dropping a course appear to be a wise decision. Before deciding to drop this course, please talk with me to be sure that this is the best possible decision for you. If you do decide to drop this course, you must initiate the process by going to the Student Services Center (the “round building”) and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation will not automatically drop you from the course. The last day to drop a course this semester is Friday, November 7.

Course Policies

Am I required to attend this course?

- Prompt arrival, attendance, and participation are all vital to your success in this course. Students are expected to attend all class meetings and contribute to the classroom experience by actively listening, asking questions, sharing examples, participating in discussions, and taking part in class activities.
- Attendance and participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. In all fairness, students will be notified that their lack of participation will result in 0 points before the points are assigned.

What are your expectations for my assignments?

- It should go without saying that quality work is an expectation. As a Communication major, it is expected that you will have effective writing and speaking skills and that you will seek my help if you need assistance in these areas. It is also expected that your work will be free from plagiarism, will demonstrate critical thinking, and will show that you are thinking “beyond the textbook.”
- All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date shown on the course syllabus, unless otherwise noted. If otherwise noted, assignments are due on the exact date and at the exact time noted on the assignment. If an assignment is late/forgotten/otherwise not turned in on time, the student will not receive credit for the assignment.
- Assignments should be turned in as a hard copy unless otherwise noted. If an assignment is turned in using a means other than hard copy, the student will not receive credit for the assignment. Students should complete assignments on time to reduce the risk of emergencies, such as running out of ink, paper, or not having access to a printer or computer. Students should also save their files in multiple locations to reduce the risk of losing their work.

What if I am absent?

- Students should send me a direct e-mail prior to the time that class starts on the day that they will be absent, informing me of their absence. Regardless of the students’ excuse, as long as this step is followed, the student will receive an excused absence and will not lose their attendance/participation points. If students do not follow this step, they will be considered unexcused unless they can supply documentation of a traditional excused absence (i.e., athletics, family emergencies, health issues). In this situation, I reserve the right to decide whether an absence is considered excused.
- Late work will only be accepted for excused absences and must be completed and turned in within 7 days of the absence.
- In the event of an unexcused absence, students will not receive credit for their attendance or missed assignments.
- Regardless of the status of an absence, when a student they are responsible for obtaining the information that was missed during class. Students may wish to select a classmate(s) at the beginning of the semester that will agree to help with this task.

I have a question about one of my grades, what should I do?

- Should a student have a question about their grade on a particular assignment, I follow the 24/7 rule: students must approach me no sooner than 24 hours and no later than 7 days after the assignment has been returned. Once 7 days have passed, the topic will be closed for discussion.

What type of citations should I use in my writing and speaking assignments?

- All assignments that require scholarly citations should adhere to the 6th edition of the APA style manual. If you do not have access to this manual, please visit: http://library.nmu.edu/guides/userguides/style_apa.htm#website
I need help with my work, what should I do?

- Come talk to me!
- I am happy to help students with their understanding of assignments by reading through drafts and answering questions about class assignments; however, I will not be able to provide adequate assistance within 36 hours of a deadline, so students should be proactive about starting their assignments and seeking feedback early.
- Should any situation arise, where I can be of assistance (i.e., you do not have a printer), please come talk to me.

What are the rules for classroom conduct?

- I treat my classroom as a small community; thus, we will maintain a harassment-free environment that is welcoming to different viewpoints and ideas. Any profane or inappropriate ethnic, gender, racial, age, appearance, and/or lifestyle-related comments will not be accepted. Any student who violates this policy will be asked to leave the classroom.
- Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, as an academic community, requires that each individual respect the needs of others to study and learn in a peaceful atmosphere. Under Article III of the Student Code of Conduct, classroom behavior that interferes with either (a) the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or (b) the ability of other students to profit from the instructional program may be considered a breach of the peace and is subject to disciplinary sanction outlined in article VIII of the Student Code of Conduct. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior may be instructed to leave the classroom. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including classrooms, online classrooms, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.

Notice to Students with Disabilities

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

Academic Advising

The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College’s Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who feel that they have not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in this class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details in the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean.

Academic Honesty

Students unaware of the university’s statement on academic honesty should review it in the Undergraduate Catalog or Student Handbook. Examples of academic dishonesty and plagiarism are using someone else’s ideas and not giving them credit; presenting a paper that is not originally yours; handing in assignments that are not originally yours; presenting “facts” or lifting ideas from sources without crediting the source; presenting falsified opinions and figures; cheating on an exam; and turning in the same work in multiple classes. If you are uncertain as to what actions constitute plagiarism or dishonesty, please ask your professor. Students who violate the code of honesty in this class will receive a 0 on that assignment. Any student receiving more than one “0” for academic dishonesty or plagiarism will fail the course and may be expelled from the program. Note: All violations of academic honesty will be reported to the Dean and Office of Student Affairs who maintains documentation of such offenses for at least 5 years.
Assignment Descriptions

**Please do not use these guidelines to begin your work early, as they are incomplete. Full descriptions and grading rubrics will be provided to you closer to the respective due dates.

Organizational History (100 points)
Students will be required to write a thoughtful explanation of our client organization’s crisis response goals and objectives and philosophy toward crisis response. Students will also be required to conduct background research on the client organization, specifically identifying information on their crisis history and the employee hierarchy/communication structure and stakeholder expectations for their organization.

Risk Assessment (100 points)
Students will be required to conduct a risk assessment for the client organization; specifically, giving attention to past crises that have occurred at the organization and crises that have occurred at similar organizations. Students will create a master list of potential crises and conduct a vulnerability assessment of these crises.

Strategic Communication Action Plan (200 points)
Using what they have learned via class discussion, the textbook, and organizational research, students will create a strategic communication action plan for the organization in regard to the master list of crises generated in the Risk Assessment. This plan will require audience analysis, composing a crisis team, creating a contact list, generating a prevention plan, and creating templates for the necessary PR documents (press releases, statements, etc.).

Evaluation Plan (100 points)
Students will be required to create means for the organization to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and implement changes as necessary.

Crisis Plan & Presentation (100 points)
At the end of the semester, students will make the necessary changes on each of the drafted items and will compile them into a Crisis Plan to give to the organization. Students will present their plans to their client.

Reflection Papers (40 points)
Students will be required to write a brief reflection of what they have learned immediately following the completion of each major assignment (Organizational History, Risk Assessment, Strategic Communication Action Plan, and Evaluation Plan).

Participation (70 points)
Students will receive 5 points for each class period that they attend and actively participate; the professor reserves the right to assign partial or no credit should students attend, but not be actively engaged in the class.
**COMM-4335_001 Schedule**

**This schedule is tentative and subject to change. All changes will be to the benefit of the student.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Discuss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, August 27</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 1</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Course Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, September 3</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
<td>DISCUSS: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, September 10</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 3</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Organizational History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, September 17</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 2</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Types of Crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, September 24</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 4</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Risk Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, October 1</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
<td>DISCUSS: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, October 8</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
<td>DISCUSS: In-Class Vulnerability Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, October 15</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 5 (p. 55-68)</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Planning, Prevention, &amp; Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, October 22</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 5 (p. 68-97)</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Response/Social Media Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, October 29</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 6</td>
<td>DISCUSS: Evaluation Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, November 5</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
<td>DISCUSS: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, November 12</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
<td>DISCUSS: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday, November 19</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
<td>DISCUSS: N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Class Status</td>
<td>Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, November 26</td>
<td>(No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 3</td>
<td>(No Class—Reading Day)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, December 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>N/A</td>
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