Course Syllabus

COMM-5335_001 – Crisis Communication
Mondays 7:00-9:30pm, OCNR 258

Dr. Michelle M. Maresh-Fuehrer
Office: Bay Hall 329
Hours: M 5:30-6:45pm, TW 2:30-4:00pm, and by appointment
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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
Designed to reach students in all areas of graduate study, this course will provide professional training in crisis communication. Students will learn how to distinguish between various types of crises; recognize crises before they occur; create a crisis team and strategy; create tools for preventing, managing, and responding to crisis situations; train spokespersons; practice effective crisis management, image restoration, and apologia; and utilize media effectively.

Student Learning Objectives
Upon successful completion of the course, students should be able to:
- Distinguish between the various types of crises.
- Understand the elements of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis communication.
- Identify effective strategies/best practices for preventing, managing, and responding to crises.
- Argue for the importance of a crisis team and crisis plan.
- Complete a case study that is worthy of a conference presentation and/or publication.

Required or Recommended Readings
Required:

Recommended:

Major Course Requirements
*Assignment descriptions appear on the 4th page of this syllabus*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crisis Plan Portfolio Minis (4 at 25 points each)</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Proposal</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Paper &amp; Presentation</td>
<td>125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation (14 days at 5 points each)</td>
<td>70</td>
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</tbody>
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Total Points: 370

Grade Calculation:
- A: 90% of the total points – 333 points – 370 points
- B: 80% of the total points – 296 points – 332 points
- C: 70% of the total points – 259 points – 295 points
- D: 60% of the total points – 222 points – 258 points
- F: 50% of the total points – 000 points – 221 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 regularly 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 for doing good work, contributing to class discussion, pursuing your professional interests outside of the classroom, and sharing your goals, successes, and challenges with us.
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.

What are your expectations for my assignments?
- It should go without saying that quality work is an expectation. As a Communication student, 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 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 or missed, 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, losing their work, or not having access to a printer or computer.

What should I do if I am going to be 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.

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 48 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.
What are the rules for classroom conduct? (Continued)

- 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.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism

University students are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the highest standards of academic honesty. Academic misconduct for which a student is subject to penalty includes all forms of cheating, such as illicit possession of examinations or examination materials, falsification, forgery, complicity, or plagiarism (Plagiarism is the presentation of the work of another as one’s own work). In this class, academic misconduct or complicity in an act of academic misconduct on an assignment or test will result in a failing grade (0) on the 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 document of such offenses for at least 5 years.

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. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information please call 361-825-3466.

Disabilities Accommodations

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116.

If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

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 6.**

Grade Appeals

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, http://cla.tamucc.edu/students/studentinfo.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.
Statement of Academic Continuity

In the event of an unforeseen adverse event, such as a major hurricane and classes could not be held on the campus of Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi; this course would continue through the use of Blackboard and/or email. In addition, the syllabus and class activities may be modified to allow continuation of the course. Ideally, University facilities (i.e. emails, websites, and Blackboard) will be operational within two days of the closing of the physical campus. However, students need to make certain that the course instructor has a primary and a secondary means of contacting each student.

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 in advance of the respective due dates.**

Crisis Plan Portfolio Minis (100 points)

Students will be asked to complete four assignments that are designed to give students practical experience in crisis communication planning. These assignments can be placed in job portfolios.

Case Study Proposal (50 points)

The final outcome of this course will be a case study paper that is worthy of presentation at a conference and/or publication in a journal. Each student will be asked to briefly propose their paper topic, list articles that they will read to help inform their paper, and outline a chronology of events that led to and resulted from the crisis. Students will also include a timeline for the work that they will do to complete the paper.

Case Study Paper & Presentation (100 points)

Each student will be required to write an 18-20 page (not including title, abstract, references, and supporting documents) case study paper. In this paper, students will: highlight a crisis event, discuss the strategies used by the organization, and critique these strategies with a discussion of the ways that the organization could improve their crisis prevention and response. Students will present their papers to the class in a conference panel setting.

Participation (70 points)

Attendance and participation will be graded. Each student will earn 5 points for every class session that they attend and sign the sign-in sheet. If students attend but do not participate in class, I reserve the right to assign 0 points for the day. Students should sign the sign-in sheet before they leave the classroom—the professor will not be responsible for “remembering” that a student attended a class that they did not sign in for.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, August 31</strong></td>
<td>READ: Introduction &amp; Chapter 1 (pp. 1-13; pp. 17-53) DISCUSS: Introduction to Crisis Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, September 7 (No Class—Labor Day Holiday)</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, September 14</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapters 11 &amp; 12 (pp. 245-281) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 1: Organizational History Crisis Plan Portfolio Mini #1 Due (in-Class)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, September 21</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapter 28 (pp. 568-590) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 2: Risk Assessment Crisis Plan Portfolio Mini #2 Due (in-Class)</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, September 28</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapters 4, 5, &amp; 6 (pp. 93-158) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 3: Strategic Communication</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 5</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapters 7, 8, &amp; 9 (pp. 159-220) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 3: Strategic Communication</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 12</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Case Study Proposal Workshop</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, October 19</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Movie Screening: Blackfish Case Study Proposal Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, October 26</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapters 13, 14, &amp; 15 (pp. 285-334) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 3: Strategic Communication</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, November 2</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapters 18, 19, &amp; 20 (pp. 381-421) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 3: Strategic Communication</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Monday, November 9</strong></td>
<td>READ: Chapters 25, 26, &amp; 27 (pp. 511-567) DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 3: Strategic Communication Crisis Plan Portfolio Mini #3 Due</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, November 16</strong></td>
<td>READ: TBA DISCUSS: Crisis Plan Step 4: Evaluation</td>
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<td><strong>Monday, November 23</strong></td>
<td>READ: N/A DISCUSS: Case Study Paper Workshop Crisis Plan Portfolio Mini #4 Due</td>
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<td>Monday, November 30</td>
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<td>READ: N/A</td>
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<td>DISCUSS: Case Study Paper Workshop</td>
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<th>Monday, December 7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>READ: N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>DISCUSS: N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case Study Paper &amp; Presentation Due</td>
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