

Loyola University Chicago  
School of Communication  
COMM 436 Crisis and Risk Communication  
Fall Semester 2018

**Class Dates:** Thursdays, August 30 through December 13

**Class Time:** 7 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.

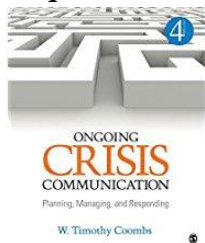
**Location:** School of Communication, Room 013

**Office Hour:** By appointment: generally, Thursdays, 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

**E-mail:** [jbrooks9@luc.edu](mailto:jbrooks9@luc.edu)

**Mobile Phone:** (847) 894-4529

**Required Texts**



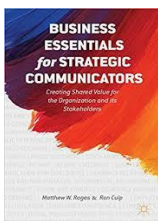
***Ongoing Crisis Communication, 4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2015***  
W. Timothy Coombs  
Sage Publications  
ISBN: 978-1452261362

***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 Texts:**



***Business Essentials for Strategic Communicators, 2014***  
Matthew W. Ragas and Ron Culp  
Palgrave MacMillan Publications.  
ISBN: 978-1-137-38773-8.

***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, Ragan's Daily Headlines, and PRSA Issues and Trends. 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 with the ability 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.

### **Attendance**

The instructor expects your attendance at all class sessions. 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 miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining content and notes from a colleague. If you will be absent, please contact the instructor in advance. You will be required to present medical or other emergency/official documentation explaining your absence to receive participation credit.

***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 4:** Last day to drop classes without a grade of "W"

**November 2:** Last day to withdraw from classes with a grade of "W"

**December 13:** Final exam

### **Grading**

**Weekly discussion of news articles (2 points each, 26 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 should include a summary of the issue described in the article, 2 to 3 specific points about how the article relates to the class and what you learned. Include a link to the story or correct references. At least seven of the articles must relate to a crisis outside the United States. **Due at noon in the dropbox each class day (except Thanksgiving, Nov. 22).**

**Participation (2 points each, 24 total points):** Each student is expected to make a significant contribution each class period, so please be prepared to speak up. Public relations is a subject that requires your participation -- silence is never an option! Note: There will be no points awarded when a student misses class. Exceptions are listed above in the paragraph on attendance. **Graded after each class.**

**In-class exercises (2 points each, up to 10 total points):** We will practice planning/writing various exercises in class. The instructor will award up to two 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 than 10 minutes. Explain the issue, what happened, explain the communication work done to resolve the issue, and explain any follow-up work that is being done. Lead the class in a discussion of the topic, and in particular, highlight the important learnings as a result of the crisis and crisis 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 14 to November 16. Submit slides, outline in the dropbox by noon the day after your presentation.**

**Crisis teams/talking points document (25 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 5.**

**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 19.**

**Crisis communication plan (50 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 10.**

**Final exam (50 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 13.**

### **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.
- Don't try to do too much at once. Keep up with the work and the readings.
- Style points count.
- 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 30**

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

#### **September 6**

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 1, Need for Crisis Management Knowledge, pgs.1-16
- *New Rules*: Introduction, pgs. 5-9
  - Crises and disasters
  - Crisis management

- Stages of a crisis
- Communication basics
- **News article due, noon**

### September 13

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 2, Effects of the Online World, pgs. 17-30
- *New Rules*: Chapter 1, Adjusting Your Approach for the Digital Age, pgs. 10-16
- Traditional crisis and role of social media
- **News article due, noon**

### September 20

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 3, Proactive Management Functions, pgs. 31-43
- *New Rules*: Chapter 2, Considerations for Professional Services Firms, pgs. 17-23
  - Types of crisis management responses
- **Begin in-class presentations**
- **News article due, noon**

### September 27

- **Guest speaker: Chris Coffey, investigative reporter, NBC5 Chicago (confirmed)**
- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 3, Proactive Management Functions (cont'd) pgs. 31-43
  - Types of crisis management responses
- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 5, Crisis Preparation, Part 1, pgs. 66-89
  - Developing crisis management teams
- **News article due, noon**
- **Begin work on crisis team/talking points document**

### October 4

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 5, Crisis Preparation: Part I (cont'd) pgs. 66-89
  - Analysis of vulnerabilities
  - Developing crisis management teams
  - Developing spokespersons
  - Unexpected developments
- **News article due, noon**
- **Crisis team/talking points document due October 5, noon**

### October 11

- 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 18

- **Guest speaker: Christie Zielinski, Vice President, KemperLesnik (confirmed)**
- Written statements (cont'd)
- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 4, Crisis Prevention, pgs. 44-65
  - News sources to scan
  - Preventive action
  - Using analytics
- *New Rules*: Chapter 6, The Importance of Data and Analytics, pgs. 44-48
- **News article due, noon**
- **Written statements due October 19, noon**

## October 25

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 6, Crisis Preparation, Part II, pgs. 90-108
  - Components of a crisis management plan
  - Review of components
- *New Rules*: Chapter 8, Creating an Effective Crisis Preparedness Plan, pgs. 57-62
- **News article due, noon**

## November 1

### **NO CLASS**

- **News article due, noon**

## November 8

- **Guest speaker: Bridget Coffing, Former Chief Communications Officer and SVP, McDonald's Corporation (confirmed)**
- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 6, Crisis Preparation, Part II (cont'd) pgs. 90-108
  - Components of a crisis management plan
  - Review of components
- **News article due, noon**
- **Discuss development of crisis management/communication plans**

## November 15

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 6, Crisis Preparation, Part II (cont'd), pgs. 90-108
  - Communicating in a crisis
  - Audiences
- *New Rules*: Chapter 3, Leveraging Employees During a Crisis, pgs. 24-31
- **News article due, noon**
- **Crisis management plan due November 16, noon**

## November 22

### **THANKSGIVING – NO CLASS**

## **November 29**

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 7, Crisis Recognition, pgs. 109-128
  - "Selling" a crisis
  - Extent of a crisis
  - "Groupthink" in a crisis
- *New Rules*: Legal Considerations for Crisis Communication, Chapter 4, pgs. 32-27
- **News article due, noon**
- **End in-class presentations**

## **December 6**

- *Ongoing CC*: Chapter 8/9, Crisis Response/Postcrisis Concerns, pgs. 129-177
  - Responding to a crisis
  - Protecting company reputation
- *New Rules*: Chapter 7, Crisis Implications for Brands, pgs. 49-56
- *Ongoing CC*: Epilogue
  - Technology
  - Globalization
- **News article due, noon**
- **Discussion of final exam requirements**

## **December 13**

Final exam

### **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**

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.

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;
- 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.

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 <http://luc.edu/english/writing.shtml#source>

In addition, a student may not submit the same paper or other work for credit in two or more classes. A student who submits the same work for credit in two or more classes will be judged guilty of academic dishonesty and will be subject to sanctions described below. This applies even if the student is enrolled in the classes during 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.

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 appropriate area head and to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication.

The office of the Dean 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](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.