

## PUR 4400 – CRISIS COMMUNICATION – SPRING 2026

Course number: 18551

Course time: Asynchronous

Course location: Canvas

Prerequisite: PUR3000 with a C or better

---

Instructor: Indee Freas

Email: ifreas@ufl.edu

Virtual Office Hours: Tuesdays, 6-8pm By Appointment

Expect a response within 24 hours, not including weekends or holidays. All online correspondence must have your full name in the message body and contain your course and section number in the subject line.

### Course Requirements

**Required Book** W. Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications ISBN: 9781544331959

#### Online Course Administration — e-Learning in Canvas

<https://elearning.ufl.edu> will be used to administer the course communication, materials (e.g., PowerPoint files, additional readings, handouts, assignment guidelines, evaluation forms), and grades. For instance, an electronic file of this document is posted on Canvas. You can access the site by using your GatorLink username and password. Please check the site for announcements and/or threads of comments from classmates, and the professor.

#### MINIMUM TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

The University of Florida expects students entering an online program to acquire computer hardware and software appropriate to his or her degree program. Most computers are capable of meeting the following general requirements. A student's computer configuration should include:

- Webcam
- Microphone
- Broadband connection to the Internet and related equipment (Cable/DSL modem)
- Microsoft Office Suite installed (provided by the university)

Individual colleges may have additional requirements or recommendations, which students should review before starting their program.

#### MINIMUM TECHNICAL SKILLS

To complete your tasks in this course, you will need a basic understanding of operating a computer and using word processing software.

#### MATERIALS/SUPPLY FEES

There is no supply fee for this course.

#### HONORLOCK

Honorlock is an online proctoring service that allows students to take exams on-demand 24/7. There are no scheduling requirements or fees.

You will need a laptop or desktop computer with a webcam, a microphone, and a photo ID. The webcam and microphone can be either integrated or external USB devices.

Honorlock requires you use the [Google Chrome](#) browser, and the Honorlock extension must be added to Chrome.

For further information, FAQs, and technical support, please visit the [Honorlock website Links to an external site.](#)

#### ZOOM

Zoom is an easy-to-use video conferencing service available to all UF students, faculty, and staff.

#### Course Description

You can find resources and help using Zoom at the [UFIT Zoom website Links to an external site.](#) Crisis Communications focuses on key elements of crisis and issues management – before, during and after a crisis. In an age when a company's every move is subject to instant, vivid, unfiltered, and global scrutiny and attack, the need for effective, proactive crisis management is greater than ever. And it is far more challenging, especially as communication technology is constantly expanding, amid multiple global crises. The structure of the course will reflect the crisis management process: pre-crisis (prevention, preparation, planning); crisis response (crisis communications and stakeholder engagement during the critical period); and post crisis (lessons learned, corrective actions and reputation recovery). Emphasis will be placed on practical application of crisis communications theory, with copious use of real life and/or simulated crisis situations.

### **Course Learning Objectives**

Upon completing this course, students will:

- Differentiate between crises, issues, and risks in organizational communication.
- Conduct a vulnerability audit and prepare a crisis communication plan.
- Identify and evaluate stakeholder needs during all stages of a crisis.
- Develop strategic messaging for traditional and digital platforms.
- Apply diverse crisis communication strategies to real and simulated scenarios.
- Assess post crisis effectiveness and develop reputation repair strategies.
- Assemble and manage an effective crisis management team, including role delegation and coordination.
- Understand the evolving stages of a crisis and how digital and social media have reshaped crisis timelines.
- Identify and address ethical challenges inherent to crisis situations, including legal and reputational risks.
- Evaluate and apply crisis communication theories and strategies to analyze real-world organizational crises, assess response effectiveness, and propose evidence-based recommendations for improvement.

### ***College of Journalism and Communications Objectives***

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located;
- demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts;
- present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies;
- write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
- apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts;

- critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness;
- apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

## Key Course Policies

### Academic Policies and Resources

Please see policies here: <https://go.ufl.edu/syllabuspolicies>

### Late or Missed Work:

As this is an online class, you are responsible for observing all posted due dates and are encouraged to be self-directed and take responsibility for your learning

There is a LATE work policy included in the grade section that will be enforced.

All written assignments must be turned into Canvas by 11:59 pm on the day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59pm. Late assignments will automatically lose a full letter grade (10 points) for each day it is late (e.g. B to a C). Some consideration, however, might be given (at the discretion of the instructor) if there are extenuating circumstances such as prolonged hospitalization, family death, or extended individual sickness; however, you need to notify me before the deadline is missed, not after the fact.

Requirements for make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found on the [UF Attendance Policies website Links to an external site.](#)

### AI Policy for Student Work

In this class I want you to produce all your own work without generative AI's assistance. It is important for me to be able to ascertain what you know and can produce unaided on your own. The use of generative AI for your assignments in this class is a violation of the honor code as you are presenting content as your own that was not fully created by you. There are various AI detection tools available (built within Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work and if evidence is found that your work is AI generated, I will submit your assignment violating the honor code.

### Course Professionalism

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school, and professional decorum is always expected. Therefore, the students, and the professor, adhere to workplace

norms for collegial and respectful interaction. Carefully consider how you participate in class discussions and in the assignment, you submit and present. You can use humor and demonstrate creativity but think ahead about how it will reflect on you.

Use your best professional judgment. Projects should not contain nudity, profanity, illegal activities, or situations that would put you or others in danger.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner — with classmates and professors.

### **Diversity Statement**

Your experience in this class is important to me. I embrace a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along several dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic class, disability, age, and religion. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as resource, strength, and benefit.

## **Grading and Assignments**

Assignments will be graded and feedback given within 7 days after the due date

### **Grading:**

Students will be graded based on their performance in four major areas, each of which constitutes a proportion of the final grade. Your grade will be calculated by the following:

### **Assignments: 25%**

Applied exercises are designed to help you practice essential crisis communication skills—such as identifying and labeling crises, drafting press statements, creating stakeholder messages, and developing response strategies.

### **Discussions: 25%**

Weekly discussions invite you to engage with classmates, apply theory to real-world events, and reflect on lessons learned. You are required to post one original response and at least one thoughtful reply that references module concepts or readings.

### **Quizzes: 25%**

The course includes a **Midterm** and **Final Quiz** designed to assess your understanding of key crisis communication concepts, models, and strategies introduced throughout the modules. These quizzes combine multiple-choice, short-answer and brief essay questions to reinforce comprehension and application of course materials.

### Case Study Project: 25%

The Case Study Project serves as the capstone assessment, allowing you to apply theories and frameworks from the course to a recent real-world crisis. You will analyze the organization's communication response, provide recommendations, and present your findings through a written overview and short recorded PowerPoint presentation.

Grading follows current [UF grading policies](#). *The grading scale for the course is as follows:*

A	94.0 – 100%	C	74.0 – 76.99%
A-	90.0 – 93.99%	C-	70.0 – 73.99%
B+	87.0 – 89.99%	D+	67.0 – 69.99%
B	84.0 – 86.99%	D	64.0 – 66.99%
B-	80.0 – 83.99%	D-	60.0 – 63.99%
C+	77.0 – 79.99%	E	below 60%

### Tentative Course Schedule\* *See Canvas for full details*

<b>Week 1</b> January 12 -18	<b>Orientation Module</b>
<b>Week 2</b> January 19 -26	<b>Module 1: Foundations of Crisis Communication</b>
<b>Week 3</b> January 26 – February 1	<b>Module 2: Signal Detection and Risk Assessment</b>
<b>Week 4</b> February 2 - 8	<b>Module 3: Planning and Crisis Teams</b>
<b>Week 5</b> February 9 - 15	<b>Module 4: Crisis Prep and Messaging</b>
<b>Week 6</b> February 16 - 22	<b>Module 5: Ongoing Crisis Communication and Media Relations</b>
<b>Week 7</b> February 23 – March 1	<b>Module 6: Mid Term Review</b>
<b>Week 8</b> March 2 - 8	<b>Module 7: Digital Crisis and Social Media</b>
<b>Week 9</b> March 9 - 14	<b>Module 8: Crisis Responding – Strategies and Ethics</b>

<b>Week 10</b> March 16 - 22	<b>Spring Break – No CLASS</b>
<b>Week 11</b> March 23 -29	<b>Module 9: Post-Crisis Evaluation and Reputation Management</b>
<b>Week 12</b> March 30 – April 5	<b>Module 10: Organizational Response to Terrorism and Tragic Events</b>
<b>Week 13</b> April 6 - 12	<b>Module 11: Back Half Review, Quiz and Case Study Reminders</b>
<b>Week 14</b> April 13 – April 19	<b>Module 11 Continued: Work on Case Study Project and Submit Final Quiz</b>
<b>Week 15</b> April 20 – April 26	<b>Module 12: Submit Case Study Project</b>

\*This syllabus is subject to change when appropriate and necessary. Updates will be posted on Canvas.

## Standard UF Policy Information and Links

### Software Use:

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

### Student Privacy:

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please go [here](#).

### In-Class Recording:

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are

prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor.

A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission from the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Policy on Course Syllabi 3 UF, Academic Affairs, July 28th, 2021 Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

#### Campus Resources:

**U Matter, We Care:** If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.

**Counseling and Wellness Center:** Visit the [Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.

**Student Health Care Center:** Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit the [Student Health Care Center website](#).

**University Police Department:** Visit [UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).

**UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center:** For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; Visit the [UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).



### Academic Resources:

**E-learning technical support:** Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

**[Career Connections Center](#):** Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.

**[Library Support](#):** Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

**[Teaching Center](#):** Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.

**[Writing Studio](#):** 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

**Student Complaints On-Campus:** Visit the [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage](#) for more information.

**On-Line Students Complaints:** View the [Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).