

**PUR4400C – CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS – SPRING 2026**

**Section:** 22803

**Course Time:** Asynchronous

**Location:** Canvas

**Prerequisite:** PUR 3000 with a minimum grade of C.

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**Instructor:** Alexandra Thompson

**Contact Information:** [lexi.thompson@ufl.edu](mailto:lexi.thompson@ufl.edu), 678-860-4311 (Email is preferred)

**Virtual Office Hours:** Tuesdays from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. EST by scheduled appointment via Zoom

**Required Texts**

Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage; Publications ISBN: 9781071816646

Short additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester.

**Course Information**

This course will consist of only asynchronous components. Each week you will have posted lectures to watch/listen to, and reading assignments. All of this comes together in your final, your posted questions throughout the semester and the large presentation project due towards the end of the class. You must keep up with the readings to fully complete your assignments project and exam. If you fully engage you should gain an appreciation of crisis communications and what solutions work—and what does not. That is invaluable knowledge if you plan a career in communications or any leadership position.

**Course Description**

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 case studies and guest

lectures by practitioners. A fictitious crisis will be presented to the class with the expectation of utilizing the principles and techniques learned in class to develop a correct response and plan.

### Course Learning Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Learn what constitutes a crisis – how it is distinct from day-to-day issues
- Develop a crisis preparedness plan and vulnerabilities assessment
- Understand how to assemble and manage a crisis management team
- Understand the typical stages of a crisis, and how social media affects the dynamics
- Identify and address the ethical issues presented by different crisis situations
- Write a crisis communications plan, including a core set of strategic messages for each key stakeholder group
- As a communications professional, how to prepare for a crisis
- Develop a post-crisis plan, which includes learnings for the organization and proof points for stakeholders on corrective actions

### 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

### 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.

### Course Policies

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](#). 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.

#### **University Policy on Accommodating Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the [Disability Resource Center](#) (352-392-8565) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter that must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

#### **University Policy on Academic Conduct**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'"

The [Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code](#) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

#### **Netiquette and Communication Courtesy**

All class members are expected to follow rules of common courtesy in all email messages, threaded discussions, and chats.

## Grading and Assignments

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

### Assignment Groups Weight:

Assignment	Percentage of Grade
Class Discussions	25%
Individual Assignments	25%
Case Study	25%
Final Exam	25%

#### **Class Discussions: 25%**

This is a communications-based class. The student views are wanted and needed. Discussions will originate from assigned readings and examine courses of action before, during and after a crisis.

#### **Individual Assignments: 25%**

Individual assignments will provide an opportunity for you to explore various aspects of crisis and how the organization's reputation was affected by their actions to the crisis.

#### **Case Study: 25%**

For this assignment, you will be to prepare a case study on a specific company's handling of a crisis. You will select the organization and the case (subject to the instructor's approval); it must be a case in which social media was or could have been a factor. The project will have a written and video presentation element.

The grade will be based on: how compelling is the situation and its impact on the organization; a comprehensive analysis of how the organization engaged with primary and secondary stakeholders through direct engagement, media relations, and social media interaction; effectiveness of the case organization's preparation, response and recovery; suggested improvements to the case organization's courses of action throughout crisis; how well the student uses logic and understands the principles of effective crisis communications.

#### **Final: 25%**

The course final will be a written test covering the class readings, the class main points, and a short crisis situation where the student offers a solution with various courses of action.

#### **Grading Scale**

Grades will be assigned based on the following:

Grade	Percentage
A	93.0-100%
A-	90.0-92.99%
B+	87.0-89.99%
B	83.0-86.99%
B-	80.0-82.99%
C+	77.0-79.99%
C	74.0-76.99%
C-	70.0-73.99%
D+	67.0-69.99%
D	64.0-66.99%
D-	60.0-63.99%
E	below 60%

**Late Work:**

All written assignments must be turned into Canvas by 11:59pm the day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59pm. You have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 25% grade reduction, after that no late work is accepted. It is your responsibility to make sure you properly upload your files (docx or .pdf).

See the current [UF Grading Policies](#) for more information.

**Course Schedule (Module Timings and Content on Canvas)**

**Module 1** General Crisis Management Knowledge  
**Module 2** How Organizations Recognize a Crisis  
**Module 3** Ongoing Crisis Communication  
**Module 4** Leadership in Crisis Communication

Orientation  
 Class Discussion and Assignment  
 Class Discussion and Assignment  
 Class Discussion and Assignment

**Module 5** Crisis Prep  
**Module 6** Social Media  
**Module 7** Social Media Continued  
**Module 8** Recognizing Crises  
**Module 9** Crisis Responding  
**Module 10** International Terrorism  
**Module 11** Post Crisis  
**Module 12** Case Study Presentation Instructions  
**Module 13** Case Study Presentations Continued  
**Module 14** Case Study Presentations Continued  
**Module 15** Case Study Presentations  
**Module 16** Final Exam

Class Discussion and Assignment  
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Class Discussion and Assignment  
Class Discussion and Assignment  
Class Discussion  
Class Discussion  
Class Discussion  
Class Discussion  
Final Exam and Case Study  
Assignment Due