

**PUR4932 Section 05GE: Spring 2013  
Crisis Communication**

**INSTRUCTOR:** Sora Kim, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor in Public Relations,  
College of Journalism and Communications

**OFFICE:** 3061 Weimer Hall  
**PHONE:** 352-392-9961 (Office)  
**EMAIL:** [sorakim@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:sorakim@jou.ufl.edu)

**CLASS LOCATION & TIME:** Weil 0273  
Tuesdays 6 - 7 Periods (12:50 pm ~ 2:45 pm) &  
Thursdays 7<sup>th</sup> Period (1:55pm ~ 2:45 pm)

**OFFICE HOURS:** Tuesdays: 2:45 pm~4:00 pm, Thursdays: 1:00 pm ~1: 50 pm  
or By appointment

**Course Description**

This course is designed to introduce you to the theory and application of crisis communication management. Crisis Communication includes anticipation, preparation, and management of crises that an organization may face. A crisis may be considered any situation that threatens the integrity of an organization's reputation, community or professional standing, operations, public structure or functions. All organizations experience crises. Crises interrupt organizations' routines and attract extreme public and media scrutiny. The goal of this course is to apply both theoretical and practical principles of crisis communication to the myriad of situations calling for action and responses to an organization's stakeholders.

**Course Objectives:**

- Acquire an overall understanding of the nature of organizational crises and effective crisis communication principles.
- Learn about the role of crisis communication theory in explaining how organizations prepare and respond to crises.
- Understand and apply effective crisis communication principles and strategies.
- Recognize potential ethical and legal problems for crisis communication managers.
- Be able to plan crisis communication plans for organizations.

## **Required Text**

We will use two textbooks throughout this course. In addition, additional readings will be assigned throughout the course and posted on Sakai. All readings should be completed prior to the class meeting for that day.

Coombs, W. T. (2012). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing and Responding (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCusker, G. (2005). *Talespin: Public relations disasters – inside stories and lessons learnt*. London: Kogan Page.

## **Orientation and Organization**

This course will employ various teaching strategies such as lectures, class discussions, presentations, group activities, etc. Sakai System (<http://lss.at.ufl.edu>) will be used for the course. Students will be responsible for keeping up with the class assignments and materials and monitoring their progress via student records on Sakai System.

## **Grading Scale:**

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B	85-89
B-	80-84
C	75-79
C-	70-74
D	60-69
E	59 and below

## **Basis for Course Grade:**

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| • Attendance, Group Activities, & Participation                  | 10% |
| • Discussion Leader & Case Analysis Paper                        | 20% |
| • Crisis News Report Paper(10% for team and 5% for individual)   | 15% |
| • Crisis Communication Plan(20% for team and 10% for individual) | 30% |
| • Simulation (15% for team and 10% for individual)               | 25% |

## **Assignments:**

**\*\*\*\*\*No late work or “makeup” options will be offered.**

Grades will be based on a combination of categories as follows:

- Attendance, Group Activities, & Participation (10%):** You are expected to attend every class on time. You are allowed **two** unexcused absence during the semester. All other absences must be cleared through me **before** class starts. You must provide **written documentation** to explain your absence. I will subtract 5 points from your final grade (not from your participation grade) for every unexcused absence. The purpose of this category is to encourage students to actively participate in our class discussions. Through attendance, in-class projects, and discussion participation, students will earn group activities and participation points. In-class projects involve working in small groups while applying concepts from the text and lectures. There will be no make-ups for any absences.
- Discussion Leader (20%):** You will facilitate a discussion once during the semester. Crisis case list is included in the syllabus. All cases are from McCusker (2005). You will sign up for your discussion leader case analysis date and case during the first week of class. Each discussion leader will prepare a 4-5 page analysis of their assigned case for the week. The written analysis should be double-spaced, typed, and stapled (12 points). APA (American Psychological Association) style should be used for references and in-text citations. Paraphrase and use quotes sparingly. Quotation marks and attribution must be included when “using” McCusker (2005) or others’ words (three or more consecutive). All quotes must be followed by the number of the page from which the quote was taken. For example: McCusker (2005) described the campaign as “one of the most successful” ever conducted (p. 73). The leader also will prepare discussion questions related to the case. Each discussion leader will have approximately 20 minutes to discuss the case with the class. You should begin your discussion with a brief presentation on the case (visuals necessary). In leading the class discussion it will be important to: (a) provide your analysis of the selected cases (including comparison/contrast to another case and new information not found in the text), (b) relate key concepts and principles to the cases and (c) provoke discussion. You also will need to prepare discussion questions in advance, which you will turn in with your paper. Your paper and discussion questions should be submitted to me via email at least by 10 pm the day before the class you are assigned to lead the discussions. **For the discussions to be successful, the entire class must read the cases each week.** We will discuss the expectations for the discussion leaders in class. The assessment criteria for the discussion leaders is posted on Sakai in the “Lessons” folder.
- Crisis News Report and Paper (15%)**

Students will be divided into small teams (two students in a group: however if you want to work alone, that’s acceptable). You will select and analyze **one** current organizational crisis (international or national) by analyzing news coverage of the crisis (at least 4-5 news and other sources). Your analysis can focus on how the organization prepared for the crisis, responded to the crisis, and/or recovered to the crisis. Make sure to incorporate concepts discussed in class. For the report, you will give a 20 minute presentation (visuals necessary) about the crisis. For the paper, you will write a 3-4 page analysis of the crisis. Your analysis should include background on the crisis, background on the organization, and an analysis of the organization’s preparation for, response to, and/or recover to the crisis. You will sign up for your crisis news report date during the first week of class. The paper is due the day you present. The assessment criteria for crisis news report paper is posted on Sakai in the “Lessons” folder. The grade received from this assignment is not necessarily the grade individual team members will receive.

Utilizing the peer evaluation form, team members will evaluate each other's contributions. Peer evaluation form is due the day you present.

- **Crisis Communication Plan 30% (20% for team and 10% for individual, approximately 12-18 pages):** You will develop a crisis communication plan in small groups (3 members). Your crisis communication plan will focus on pandemic flu. As a team, you will select the specific organization you design the plan for, but I will designate the type of organization you must select (corporate, government, or nonprofit) based upon your preferences. We will discuss the format for the crisis communication plan in class. Your crisis communication plan is **due April 4 (Thursday)**. The assessment criteria for the crisis communication plan are posted on Sakai in the "Lessons" folder. Your crisis communication plan will follow the format outlined by Fearn-Banks (2007), which we will discuss in class. You will receive two grades for the crisis communication plan: team and individual. I will assign the team grade based on the assessment criteria posted on Sakai. The individual grade will be assigned by your teammates. Each team member will complete an evaluation of each other and I will average the evaluations for your individual grade. Peer evaluation is due on the day you present the plan (during week 14).

- **Simulation (25%: 15% for team and 10% for individual): April 16, 12:50 pm-2:40PM**

In lieu of a final exam, you will work in teams to respond to a hypothetical crisis involving pandemic flu. The simulation will occur on April 16 during our regular class time period. We will discuss the structure of the simulation in class. The assessment criteria for the simulation are posted on Sakai in the "Lessons" folder.

You will receive two grades for the simulation: team and individual. I will assign the team grade based on the assessment criteria posted on Blackboard. The individual grade will be assigned by your teammates. Each team member will complete an evaluation of each other and I will average the evaluations for your individual grade. **Peer evaluation for simulation is due April 18 (Thursday).**

## **Tentative Course Schedule:**

Course schedule is subject to change, as instructor deems appropriate and necessary

### **Week 1: Jan. 8 & 10 : Introduction to the course**

- Introduction to the course
- Sign up for discussion leadership and case analysis paper, current crisis news report dates
- Coombs Chapter 1, A Need for More Crisis Management Knowledge

### **Week 2: Jan 15 & 17 : Crisis Communication Management**

Readings:

- Coombs Chapter 1, A Need for More Crisis Management Knowledge
- Coombs Chapters 3, Proactive Management Functions and Crisis Management

### **Week 3: Jan 22 & 24: Ongoing approach: Issues management, Risk management, Reputation Management**

Readings:

- Coombs Chapters 3, Proactive Management Functions and Crisis Management
- Chapter 4, The Crisis Prevention Process

### **Week 4: Jan 29 & 31 : Crisis Communication Theories**

Readings:

- Jaques, T. (2007). Issues management and crisis management: An integrated, non-linear, relational construct. *Public Relations Review*, 33, 147-157.
- Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177-186.
- Coombs, W. T. (2004). Impact of past crises on current crisis communication: Insights from situational crisis communication theory. *The Journal of Business Communication*, 41(3), 265-289.

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Jan 31):

*Talespin*: 1. p. 27 (“Broadcast media-PR man of letters”)  
2. p. 67 (“Financial PR 1-Share value takes a kicking”)

### **Week 5: Feb.5 & 7 : Crisis Detection & Crisis Preparation**

Readings:

- Coombs Chapters 5 & 6: Crisis Preparation
- Penrose, J. M. (2000). The role of perception in crisis planning. *Public Relations Review*, 26(2), 155-171.

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb 5):

*Talespin*: 3. p. 185 (“Philanthropy – A good strategic fit?”)

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb 7):

*Talespin*: 4. p. 265 (“Television – Boggled down”)

5. p. 69 (“Financial PR 2 – From sexual relations to investor relations”)

**Week 6: Feb. 12 & 14: Crisis Preparation**

Readings:

- Fearn-Banks. (2007). The Crisis Communication Plan.
- Coombs Chapter 6

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb. 12):

*Talespin*: 6. p. 84 (“Guerrilla marketing – Naked ambition”)

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb. 14):

*Talespin*: 7. p. 196 (“Propaganda-Truth is the first casualty of PR war”)

8. p. 99 (“Hype-Bottled water launch becomes washout”)

**Week 7: Feb. 19 & 21: Legal/Ethical/Cultural Concerns**

- Fitzpatrick, K. R., & Rubin, M. S. (1995). Public relations versus legal strategies in organizational crisis decisions. *Public Relations Review*, 21(1), 21-23.
- Martinelli, K. A., & Briggs, W. (1998). Integrating public relations and legal responses during a crisis: The case of Odwalla, Inc. *Public Relations Review*, 24(4), 443-460.
- Haruta, A. & Hallahan, K. (2003). Cultural issues in airline crisis communications: A Japan-US comparative study. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 13(2), 122-150.
- Taylor, M. (2000). Cultural variance as a challenge to global public relations: A case study of Coca-Cola scare in Europe. *Public Relations Review*, 26, 277-293
- Wertz, E., & Kim, S. (2010). Cultural Issues in Crisis Communication: A Comparative Study Crisis Messages Chosen by Korean and U.S. Print Media. *Journal of Communication Management* 14 (1), 81-94.

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb.19):

*Talespin*: 9. p. 13 (“Astroturfing – PR creates smokescreen”)

Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb.21):

*Talespin*: 10. p. 57 (“Endorsements – Radio star makes waves”)

11. p. 81 (“Grassroots campaigns – Boob job exposed”)

## **Week 8: Feb. 26 & 28: Crisis Response**

### Readings:

- Coombs Chapter 8
- Coombs, W. T. (1995). Choosing the right words: The development of guidelines for the selection of the “appropriate” crisis-response strategies. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 8, 447-476.
- Kim, S., Avery, E. & Lariscy, R.W. (2009), “Are Crisis Communicators Practicing What We Preach?:An Evaluation of Crisis Response Strategy Analyzed in Public Relations Research from 1991 and 2009,” *Public Relations Review*.
- Kim, S. & Liu, B. F. (2012), "Are All Crises Opportunities? A Comparison of How Corporate and Government Organizations Responded to the 2009 Flu Pandemic," *Journal of Public Relations Research*.

### Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb.26):

*Talespin*: 12. p.148 (“Libel – Lawsuit hard to swallow for PR people”)

### Discussion Leader Case Studies (Feb 28):

*Talespin*: 13. p. 19 (“Brands-Cola brands fizzing after allegations”)  
14. p. 40 (“Crisis management-Motorists let down by tire fiasco”)

## **Week 9: Mar. 5 & 7 : Spring Break (No Classes)**

## **Week 10: Mar. 12 & 14 : Discussion Leader Presentation**

### Discussion Leader Case Studies (Mar 12):

- 15. p. 52 (“Disclosure-‘Virus’ catches consultancy out”)
- 16. p. 75 (“Goodwill – Trouble brewing”)
- 17. p. 227 (“Rumor management – Devil of a stain mars reputation”)
- 18. p. 47 (“Diplomacy – Love thy neighbor”)

### Discussion Leader Case Studies (Mar. 14):

- 19. p. 113 (“Interview 2-Dogged by bad publicity”)
- 20. p. 179 (“Off the record – All that glitters....”)

## **Week 11: Mar. 19 & 21: Role of Technology**

### Readings:

- Coombs Chapter 2
- Perry, D. C., Taylor, M., & Doerfel, M. L. (2003). Internet-based communication in crisis management. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 17(2), 206-232.
- Taylor, M., & Kent, M.L. (2007). Taxonomy of mediated crisis responses. *Public Relations Review*, 33, 140-146.

Crisis News Report Team Presentation (Mar.19): Team 1 and 2  
Crisis News Report Team Presentation (Mar.21): Team 3 and 4

**Week 12: Mar. 26 & 28 : Work on crisis communication plan in class**

- Work on Crisis Communication Plans
- **\*\*\*You must come to class to work on your plans\*\*\***

**Week 13: April 2 : : Post Crisis Concerns and Final Lessons & April 4: Simulation Review**

- **\*\*\*Crisis Communication Plan Due (April 4)\*\*\***

Readings:

- Coombs Chapter 9
- Wise, K. (2004). Attribution versus comparison : The City of Chicago's response to the E2 crisis. *Public Relations Review*, 30 (3), 347-356.
- DeVries, D. S. & Fitzpatrick, K. R. (2006). Defining the characteristic of a lingering crisis: Lessons from the National Zoo. *Public Relations Review*, 32(2), 160-167.
- Benoit, W. L. & Brinson, S.L.(1999). Queen Elizabeth's image repair discourse: Insensitive royal or compassionate queen? *Public Relations Review*, 25 (2), 145-156.

Crisis News Report Team Presentation (April 2): Team 5  
Crisis News Report Team Presentation (April 4): Team 6

**Week 14: April 9 & 11: : Crisis Communication Plan Presentation**

- Crisis Communication Plan Team Presentation

**Week 15: April 16 : Simulation & April 18: Final Lessons**

**\*\*\*Simulation is on April 16, 12:50 pm-2:40PM\*\*\***

**Week 16: April 23 : Last Day of Class:**