

JOMC 433 “Crisis Communication”— Spring 2014

Professor Queenie Byars Class meets TR at 2 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. in CA 340A
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E-mail: qbyars@email.unc.edu Office hours: 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; TR or by appointment

General Requirements, Testing and Grading

Prerequisites:

To take this course as an undergraduate you must have completed JOMC 153, “News Writing,” and JOMC 137, “Principles of Advertising and Public Relations.” Graduate students will have an additional special assignment related to work in this class, including managing and editing *UNC Verbatim*—a joint public relations class online publication. I will meet with graduate students during the second week of class to discuss this in detail.

Course Overview:

“Crisis Communication” provides a comprehensive assessment and understanding of the nature of crisis. It also examines the role public relations professionals play in helping profit, nonprofit and government organizations and individuals to manage and find success by optimal use of mass communication theories and best practices. The course introduces students to the distinctive areas of crisis research and practice as identified by leading crisis theorists—prevention, preparation, recognition, response and postcrisis concerns. It also focuses on the three stages of crisis—precrisis, the crisis event and postcrisis.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

1. List and explain the principles of contemporary crisis communication management.
2. Explain the role of communication in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and apply relevant aspect of that system in hypothetical crises.
3. Apply crisis communication theories, principles and strategies; understand legal and ethical issues and solutions.
4. Analyze and critique a crisis communication plan.
5. Demonstrate media engagement knowledge and skills.

Required texts:

Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing and Responding. W. Timothy Coombs, 2009, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Third edition. ISBN: 978-1-4129-8310-5.

Keeping Cool on the Hot Seat: Dealing Effectively with the Media in Times of Crisis. Judith C. Hoffman, 2011, Clayton, NC: Four C’s Publishing Company. Fifth Edition. ISBN: 978-0-9709014-3-9.

Other required readings as indicated on the class weekly schedule.

OTHER REQUIRED RESOURCES

➤ The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) operates the Emergency Management Institute (EMI). Two important course resources are available online at <http://training.fema.gov/IS/NIMS.asp>. See IS 700.a *National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction* and IS-702.a *National Incident Management System, Public Information Systems*.

➤ *The Encyclopedia of Public Relations*, edited by Robert Heath is an e-book available to all UNC students online via UNC Libraries <http://search.lib.unc.edu/search?R=UNCb5324321>

➤ Online Crisis Communication course modules will be posted on Sakai. See weekly course schedule for dates.

➤ Students select book on some aspect of crisis communication (NOTE: see Book Review section below)

Sakai

I will post assignments and resources on Sakai throughout the semester. Please check it often and let me know quickly if you need further clarification.

Method of Study:

Lectures, class discussion and analyzing documentaries about organizational and individual crisis are the major teaching tools for this course. Lecture materials and guest speakers will highlight the role communicators play in real world crisis. Each student is expected to read the assigned readings prior class to be prepared to participate in class discussion. There will also be a number of class exercises where students will work in groups or individually to evaluate the communication programs and activities of various organizations. Students will also be called on to present facts as well as analyze the effectiveness of crisis communication plans and execution by various organizations and individuals. Specifically, each student will have a single organization or individual that is dealing with a crisis to monitor and present updates on throughout the semester.

Work handed in by students is expected to be typed and professional as possible. That includes presentation of material as well as the thoroughness and quality of ideas. Papers and exams will be graded accordingly with points deducted for poor writing, organization, grammar or spelling.

The quality and quantity of student participation in class discussions will be assessed by the professor and figured into the final grade. Active and thoughtful participation and additional research is essential in order to receive an "A" in this course. NOTE: Class attendance is essential and absences will affect your class participation grade and final grade. Make-up work for class exercises and assignments is not possible.

Crisis Communication Media Training

All students will participate in small group mock press conferences. The groups will conduct

separate simulated press conferences. Students will meet in advance to discuss assigned topics to research and prepare appropriate press advisories, fact sheets, FAQs, talking points/messages, opening statements and related assignments.

Class Publication Project

Students will work together in groups of four members each to produce and publish an online blog titled *UNC Verbatim*. It will be an online record of official statements made by individuals or issued by organizations experiencing a PR crisis. The purpose of the blog is to encourage you to stay abreast of crisis events and also provide you an opportunity to produce a public relations product for the Web. Co-editors and four assistant editors will be chosen during the second week of classes along with a webmaster. Publication dates are in February and March.

Selected quotes should be short (not more than 35 words) and taken verbatim from speakers' comments. Proper attribution such as the official's full name, title, the source and date the remark was spoken or published must be included with the citation. Students will conduct research to collect verbatim comments from sources such as public records, speeches, newspapers, magazines, electronic broadcasts, etc.

As an online publication, the audience for *Verbatim* extends well beyond UNC Chapel Hill. *Verbatim* will be a professional product in both appearance and content. Archived comments will be resident and easily accessible on the Web site. *The professor and editor will review and approve all content prior to publication.*

Book Review

Each student must also read and complete a book review on the topic of crisis communication for publication in *Verbatim* or other publications. The professor must approve book selections in advance in order to satisfy the requirement. Book reviews should be typed, double spaced and approximately 400 words in length. Don't forget to include a recommendation on whether or not the book is appropriate as supplemental reading for crisis communication courses. Also include author's name, number of pages, publisher and copyright date. Additionally, the book review must be read, peer reviewed (edited) and initialed by at least one other student in the class prior to turn in. Turn in an edited copy and a final clean copy. The deadline to submit selection of your book title is January 23 and the written book review due Feb. 27.

NIMS Online Training

Students are required to complete self-paced NIMS training modules and print out a Certificate of completion for course credit. Additionally, a written paper that analyzes and critiques the NIMS communication plan is required. The paper should be typed with paragraph indents, single-spaced and the length should be a minimum of two pages. Both the certificate and paper are due on April 11. Early completion and turn-in of assignments is welcomed.

Examinations:

There will be one exam consisting of multiple-choice questions and one essay question. Make-up exams will be allowed only at the discretion of the professor. Textbooks, readings, in-class discussions and guest lectures will be covered in the exam. *NOTE: You should plan to take notes in class as the lecture expands beyond the weekly PowerPoint presentation.*

ASSESSMENT PLAN

Measurement percentages		Grading Scale
NIMS Online Training	10%	A=100-94 A-= 93-90 B+=89-87 B=86-84 B-=83-80 C+=79-77 C=76-74 C-=73-70 D =69-65 F=64 and below
Class Participation Includes: Media training exercises	20%	
Crisis Communication Online Modules	15%	
Book Review	10 %	
Written critique of crisis comm plan	10%	
<i>Verbatim</i>	15%	
Exam	20%	

Out of class reading assignments:

Students should complete all textbook reading assignments and extra reading assignments before the date they are assigned for in-class discussion. See weekly class schedule for dates.

Remember, class discussion is an important part of your grade.

Attendance:

Attendance is expected, and you are responsible for all announcements and schedule changes made in class. There is no substitute for attending class, participating, listening, and taking notes. Attendance will be monitored. If you are absent, it is your responsibility to borrow notes from classmates.

Honor code:

Each student in this class is expected to conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University Honor System. All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. A breach of the honor code and will be dealt with accordingly. The Honor Code is covered in more detail at <http://honor.unc.edu/>

Diversity:

The University's policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Nondiscrimination as outlined in the 2011-2012 Undergraduate Bulletin at <http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/>. In summary, UNC does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression or disabilities.

Special accommodations:

If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let me know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Department of Disability Services Web site at <http://disabilityservices.unc.edu> or call 919.962.8300. If you need assistance or services from the Academic Success Program for Students with LD/ADHD please contact them at 919-962-7227 or <http://www.unc.edu/asp/>

Harassment:

UNC does not tolerate harassment based on gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, culture, disability, or for any other reason. It is also a violation of the Honor Code and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) and Title IX of the Educational Amendments. If you need assistance with a harassment issue of problem, bring it to my attention or The Office of the Dean of Students, dos@unc.edu or 919-966-4042.

Career assistance:

I encourage every student to visit the UNC Career Services Office in Hanes Hall and take full advantage of the available programs and services early in the semester. Additionally, you should contact Jay Eubank, JOMC Director of Career Services located in CA162 for help in finding resources and referral information on possible jobs and internships. Additionally, I am available after class should you want to discuss the merits of a potential job or career in crisis communication or other areas of public relations.

(Revised as of 12/19/2013)