CJT 722 - Crisis Communication– 3 Credits

Time: Tuesdays, 6:00-8:30 p.m.  
Room: EGJ 223

Instructor: Dr. Shari R. Veil  
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Office Hours: Mondays 2-3, Wednesdays 11-noon, or by appt.

Course Description: This course follows the crisis communication management process through the stages of pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. The pre-crisis stage discusses planning and environmental scanning. The crisis stage discusses communication strategies for crisis management. The post-crisis stage depicts crisis as an opportunity for organizational learning and for rebuilding or expanding public trust. The course uses a case approach throughout.

Learning Outcomes:  
- The students will be able to explain how communication can prevent, cause, accelerate, and assist in the recovery from a crisis event.  
- The students will be able to perform a risk assessment and develop a crisis communication plan.  
- The students will be able to select the relevant communication theories to fit a crisis situation.  
- The students will be able to assess a crisis communication response for adherence to best practices in risk and crisis communication and critically analyze the ethical, cultural and social implications of the case.

ASSIGNMENTS (approximately 300 POINTS)

Discussion Questions (approximately 40 POINTS)  
By 10:00 a.m. every Tuesday, submit three thought provoking discussion questions or points of contention and a paragraph for each providing the context for the question or contention and a reflection on each question or contention (no definition questions or any question that is answered in the readings). All discussion questions/ contentions must be submitted via the Reading Responses button on the class Blackboard site by 10 a.m. on Tuesday to receive credit.

Crisis Du Jour (10 POINTS)  
On your assigned day you will deliver a 5-minute presentation to the class and turn in a 1-page outline on a current crisis in the headlines. In both the presentation and outline you will describe the crisis situation including where you learned of it (with proper APA citation) organization(s)/individual(s) involved, current status, key issues, and your assessment of the crisis communication response thus far. If you are not able to present on your assigned day you must secure a trade in presentation day and both parties must notify me a week before the first of the two presentations.
**Reaction Papers (90 POINTS)**
Students will receive a question based on the reading assignment for each lecture/discussion week. Students are required to write answers to the questions for the next week’s class. Answers should not exceed 500 words and will be discussed in class. Students receive up to 10 points for each weekly assignment. Students can choose to skip one of the reaction papers without losing points. Students can choose to complete all reaction papers and receive additional points.

**Activities (approximately 20 POINTS)**
There will be in-class activities, assignments, case discussions, and reflection papers throughout the semester. Points for these activities may not be made up.

**Drafts (15 POINTS)**
You will submit drafts of your paper during the semester. Drafts must show progress throughout the semester.

**Final Paper (100 POINTS)**
Each student will write a 20-25 page crisis study analysis. The format will include an introduction of the study, a literature review of the theoretical lens, a methods section detailing data collection, an analysis of the study through the theoretical lens and discussion of how the theoretical perspective was extended through the analysis, and study conclusions. Students will need to cite at least 20 peer-reviewed sources.

**Final Paper Presentation (25 POINTS)**
Each student will present their final paper. Using PowerPoint as an AV tool, students will explain the background of the study, the theoretical lens, and the analysis of the case through the theoretical lens. Presenters must involve the audience through examples, activities, or discussion.

**Assignment Policy:**
All assignments, unless otherwise noted, are due at the beginning of class even if a student is absent from class or running late. In professional communication practice an assignment or project that is not timely becomes useless, regardless of the reason. If you are ill or gone the day an assignment is due you may email the assignment before the start of class. *Assignments turned in after the start of class will be docked a minimum of five points. Assignments not turned in by the end of class will receive zero points.*

**Attendance Policy:**
This class is based on discussion of the readings and examples presented in class. If you are not in class you will not be able to participate fully in the class and you will miss instruction on assignments and activities. Daily attendance will not be taken, however, assignments and activities will be collected for points. If you are not in class, you cannot make-up the points missed. If you are not in the classroom when assignments are distributed you will not have the opportunity to do the assignment (e.g. if you come in the classroom after an activity or leave early). In addition, if you do not turn in the assignment when collected you will not receive points for the assignment (forgetting to turn in a project at the end of the hour is considered the same as not doing it). *There is no allowance given for an excused absence vs. an unexcused absence for in-class activities.* Allowances will be made for major assignments only with
documentation for the most dire of circumstances (the computer lab not being open, printer not working 10 minutes before class, computer crashing when you didn’t save a backup, oversleeping, traffic, trouble parking, etc. are not dire circumstances). S.R. 5.2.4.2 defines the following as acceptable reasons for excused absences: (a) serious illness, (b) illness or death of family member, (c) University-related trips, (d) major religious holidays, and (e) other circumstances found to fit “reasonable cause for nonattendance” by the professor. Students may be asked to verify their absences in order for them to be considered excused. Senate Rule 5.2.4.2 states that faculty have the right to request “appropriate verification” when students claim an excused absence because of illness or death in the family. Students anticipating an absence for a university-related function need to provide documentation from their coach or advisor prior to the absence. Students anticipating an absence for a major religious holiday are responsible for notifying the instructor in writing of anticipated absences due to their observance of such holidays no later than the last day in the semester to add a class. Information regarding dates of major religious holidays may be obtained through the religious liaison, Mr. Jake Karnes (859-257-2754). Students are expected to withdraw from the class if more than 20% of the classes scheduled for the semester are missed (excused or unexcused) per university policy.

**Academic Dishonesty:**
Students are expected to adhere to University policy on cheating and plagiarism in all courses. The minimum penalty for a first offense is a zero on the assignment on which the offense occurred. If the offense is considered severe or the student has other academic offenses on their record, more serious penalties, up to suspension from the university may be imposed. Plagiarism and cheating are serious breaches of academic conduct. Each student is advised to become familiar with the various forms of academic dishonesty as explained in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities. Complete information can be found at the following website: [http://www.uky.edu/Ombud](http://www.uky.edu/Ombud). A plea of ignorance is not acceptable as a defense against the charge of academic dishonesty. It is important that you review this information as all ideas borrowed from others need to be properly credited. Part II of *Student Rights and Responsibilities* (available online [http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html](http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html)) states that all academic work, written or otherwise, submitted by students to their instructors or other academic supervisors, is expected to be the result of their own thought, research, or self-expression. *Thus, all work produced for this class must be original and not previously or concurrently submitted in another class or venue.* In cases where students feel unsure about the question of plagiarism involving their own work, they are obliged to consult their instructors on the matter before submission. When students submit work purporting to be their own, but which in any way borrows ideas, organization, wording or anything else from another source without appropriate acknowledgement of the fact, the students are guilty of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes reproducing someone else’s work, whether it be a published article, chapter of a book, a paper from a friend or some file, or something similar to this. *Plagiarism also includes the practice of employing or allowing another person to alter or revise the work which a student submits as his/her own, whoever that other person may be.* Students may discuss assignments among themselves or with an instructor or tutor, but when the actual work is done, it must be done by the student, and the student alone. When a student’s assignment involves research in outside sources of information, the student must carefully acknowledge exactly what, where and how he/she employed them. If the words of someone else are used, the student must put quotation marks around the passage in question and add an appropriate indication of its origin. Making
simple changes while leaving the organization, content and phraseology intact is plagiaristic. However, nothing in these Rules shall apply to those ideas which are so generally and freely circulated as to be a part of the public domain (Section 6.3.1). *Taking credit for work you did not do or giving credit to others for work they did not do (including signing someone’s name to a group activity) is academic dishonesty.* Any assignment you turn in may be submitted to an electronic database to check for plagiarism.

**Technology & Outside Work:**
Use of laptops, cell phones, MP3 players, and other technology is prohibited during class time. All items must be put away and turned off when you enter class. In addition, no outside work is allowed in class (this includes homework and studying for another class). *Violation of this policy will result in dismissal from the class and forfeiture of the class activity points for the day.*

**Diversity / Harassment:**
All members of this class will be treated with respect. Freedom of expression requires tolerance of opinions that may be offensive to some. However, conduct which constitutes harassment or discrimination on the basis of sex, color, religion, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, age, beliefs, or disability is strictly prohibited. If you feel uncomfortable in the classroom, please let me know so it can be corrected.

**Special Needs:**
If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me as soon as possible during scheduled office hours. In order to receive accommodations in this course, you must provide me with a Letter of Accommodation from the Disability Resource Center (Room 2, Alumni Gym, 257-2754, email address: jkarnes@email.uky.edu) for coordination of campus disability services available to students with disabilities.

**Grievance Procedure:**
Occasionally, students are unsatisfied with some dimension of the course. In such cases, students should schedule a meeting, first, with the instructor. If the student and instructor cannot reach a satisfactory resolution, a joint meeting will be scheduled with the associate dean for graduate studies.
CJT 722 DAILY SCHEDULE
Dates and assignments can and will change

January 17: Perceptions of Risk and Crisis
Expectations, Crisis Du jour Example, The Endurance
- **In-Class Activity:** Preconceived risk-perceptions and risky Jenga
- **In-Class Activity:** Identify the prodromes (warning signals), acute phase (trigger point), and chronic phase (response strategies) of The Endurance crisis. Do you believe there was a resolution? Why or why not? What role did leadership play in this crisis?

January 24: Defining Crisis Management
Crisis Du jour 1&2, The Endurance Discussion
- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**
- **Reaction Paper:** What are the differences between a routine emergency and a crisis? How are they identified, communicated, managed, confused?

January 31: Issues Management – Identifying the Prodromes
Crisis Du jour 3&4
- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**
• Reaction Paper: Has the application of issues management in crisis communication research stretched the concept too far from its original purpose? Are there benefits/detriments to constraining issues management study to activist and policy issues?

February 7: Managing and Communicating Risk
Crisis Du jour 5&6, The Spill
• In-Class Activity: What risk management decisions contributed to BP’s crisis? What communication strategies exacerbated the crisis?
• Readings & Discussion Questions:
• Reaction Paper: Should organizations rely on a quantitative risk assessment or cost/benefit analysis in making risk management decisions? If so, why? If not, how else should they manage risk decisions?

February 14: Planning and Practicing
Crisis Du jour 7&8
• In-Class Activity: Identifying risks, allocating resources, making a plan
• Readings & Discussion Questions:
• Reaction Paper: If you cannot predict how a crisis will unfold, why plan?
February 21: Mediated Crisis
Crisis Du jour 9&10, OKC News Coverage

- **In-Class Activity:** Responding to the media in a press conference
- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**

- **Reaction Paper:** How has the evolving media landscape created challenges and opportunities in crisis communication?

February 28: Rhetorical Perspectives
Crisis Du jour 11&12

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**

- **Reaction Paper:** What has the greatest impact in a crisis - what is said, how it is said, who says it, or through which medium it is said?
March 6: Reputation Management & SCCT  
*Paper idea discussion*

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**

- **Draft 1:** 3 pages of a nugget of an idea that might turn into a paper

March 13: SPRING BREAK

March 20: Strategic Ambiguity  
*9/11 Giuliani Press Conference, Paper idea meetings*

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**

- **Reaction Paper:** To what extent are spokespersons ethical or unethical when they engage in strategic ambiguity?

March 27: Organizational Legitimacy  
*Dominos, Paper idea meetings*

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**

- **Reaction Paper:** To what extent can organizations create crises in their attempt to protect against a legitimacy threat?

**April 3: Making Sense of Crises**

*Mann Gulch, Paper discussion*

- **In-Class Activity:** How are organizational learning, sensemaking, and risk perceptions related concepts?

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**

- **Draft 2:** 5 pages of something somewhat coherent that will contribute to your final paper

**April 10: Chaos, Contingency, and Complexity**

*Disaster in Japan, Paper meetings*

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**
- **Reaction Paper:** How does a cascading crisis event like the 2010 Japan earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear disaster epitomize chaos theory?

### April 17: Perceptions, Preparedness, Culture & Resilience
*When the Levees Broke, Pandemic Aids*

- **In-Class Activity:** How does culture affect risk perceptions and crisis sensemaking? How does it affect a community’s ability to “bounce back” from a crisis?
- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**
- **Draft 3:** 10 pages of something that is coming together as a real paper

### April 24: Crisis Renewal, Leadership, and Virtuous Responses
*Paper meetings*

- **Readings & Discussion Questions:**
- **Reaction Paper:** What is the role of leadership in moving to a discourse of renewal?

### May 1: Final Presentations; Final Papers Due at 6 p.m.