



MPPR – 810 01 Crisis Communications

GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications

Thursday, 5:20 p.m. -7:50 p.m., Spring 2017

Instructors: E. Bruce Harrison and Judith Muhlberg

640 Massachusetts Ave Washington, D.C. 20001, Room C204

Office hours: Arranged by appointment.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course provides an advanced learning opportunity in corporate crisis analysis, response and management, from the perspective of the chief communication officer (CCO). Note: This course is focused on crises in enterprises (e.g., corporations, associations and other organizations). It is not intended to deal with government crises (CDC, FDA or other government ordered recalls), except as they affect and are dealt with by the enterprises facing the crises. Course participants will assume a top-level chief communications officer (CCO) perspective to analyze corporate/enterprise crisis situations, understand and create communication strategies designed for *best achievable outcomes*. Case studies, guest lectures and participative exercises will be used. The following guide will help provide focus for individual assessment and class discussion.

CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS CRISIS GUIDE – QUESTIONS TO ANSWER

1. What is a business (enterprise or corporate) crisis? The class will agree on a common definition of a corporate communication crisis. This will help determine further analyses, strategies and plan execution.
2. What are the CAUSES of business crises?
3. What PRE-CRISIS INTELLIGENCE tools can be deployed to predict business crises?
4. What RISKS are posed to the values and success of the enterprise?
5. What are the BEST PRACTICES leading corporations employ to prepare the company to handle a crisis (communications plan, training, preparedness team, etc.)?
6. What are the specific REPUTATION RISKS?
7. Who are the *shared-value* STAKEHOLDERS impacted by the crisis?
8. What are the common *purposes* of COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES?
9. What are KEY MESSAGES for each shared-value group?
10. What is the recovery or turning point (CLIMAX) of a crisis?
11. How does the enterprise determine impact on stakeholder trust (REPUTATION)?
12. What steps can a company take as the result of this crisis to protect/restore trust (NEW COMMITMENTS)?
13. And what are LESSONS LEARNED in *post-crisis analysis*?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This course is intended to provide an understanding of the framework and tools necessary to develop the expertise and confidence to successfully handle communication responsibilities in a corporate crisis situation. Through analysis of case studies and scenario challenges, you will be asked to think strategically, develop robust, proactive plans and make recommendations to solve crisis-related



business challenges through corporate communications. In addition, corporate communication officers (CCOs) and other business professionals will be invited into the class to present crisis case histories and to engage with class members in discussing communication strategies. Lessons directly relevant to modern corporate communication will be taught through class interaction, role-playing, and a series of individual and group assignments—both written and stand-up presentation exercises.

ATTENDANCE

In-class discussion and practice are essential to mastering the content of this course. Students are expected to attend every class and arrive on time. If you are detained from attending a class or arriving before it begins, you are responsible for notifying us via email prior to the start of class. Missing more than two classes will result in a final grade reduction of one level (for example, an A will be converted to an A-). Absences from classes, beyond the initial two, will result in further reduction of the final grade. If you are absent for more than four classes, you will be in danger of failing this course.

WORK SUBMITTED

Communications is a “deadline-driven” profession. You are expected to submit accurate, high-quality, executive-level presentation work on time. **YOU MUST PROVIDE TWO PRINTED, HARD COPIES OF EACH ASSIGNMENT.** These copies should be given to the instructors *on or before the deadline*. You are also asked to provide an electronic version to the instructors on or before the deadline. Papers submitted not meeting these requirements will lose points.

APPEARANCE COUNTS! Submitted assignments must follow a specific format. All written assignments should be typed in 12-point, Times Roman font, 1.5-spaced using one-inch margins with correct spelling and grammar. Please include your name, assignment title and the date on *each* page of all written submissions. Papers submitted not meeting these requirements will lose points.

Title pages, inserts, graphs and tables should be simple, executive-style presentations. The use of color should be eliminated or limited to instances, such as graphs, where color is necessary. No ‘drop-out’ type (e.g., white letters on a black or colored background) is permitted. Any mistake in proofing, grammar or spelling will result in one-half letter grade lower than the content would merit.

All assignments **will be graded** based on the following criteria:

- *Professionalism* – concise, clearly stated, free of errors.
- *Qualities of thinking* – ideas are based on research or best practices; assignment demonstrates solid, strategic thinking.
- *Quality of execution* – in competitive corporate environments, delivering what’s required is different than delivering what’s expected. You have the opportunity to take each assigned “project” and demonstrate star quality.
- *Creativity* – strategies and tactics are thoughtful, targeted, measurable, and will reach and engage the target stakeholders to take action.
- *Executive Ready* – Your “assignment” is written in a business format for your CEO, CCO and other senior executives to review and approve

COURSE POLICIES: CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES

A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off cell phones as well as any other communication device while in class. Class discussions should be respectful



and considerate of others' views and opinions. What happens in class stays in class unless you receive permission from the instructor to share something.

If you need to miss class: The assignment is due *before* class begins.

Late work: If you turn in an assignment late, you will receive ***one-half letter grade lower for each day it is late.*** If you have extenuating circumstances or need special accommodations, please let us know *in advance of the due date*, and we will try to accommodate your needs.

REQUIRED READING

Title: ***Leadership Communication: How Leaders Communicate and How Communicators Lead in Today's Global Enterprise***

Authors: E. Bruce Harrison and Judith Muhlberg

ISBN: 13: 978-160649-808-8 (Paperback); 13:978-160649-809-5 (e-book)

Publisher: Business Expert Press, New York, 2014.

Year: 2014

Price: \$39.56 (Paperback); \$19.95 (Kindle Edition). (Available from the Georgetown University book store or: sales@businessexpertpress.com or www.Amazon.com)

Title: ***Damage Control (Revised & Updated): The Essential Lessons of Crisis Management***

Authors: Eric Dezenhall and John Weber

ISBN: 978-1-935212-24-9 (Paperback); 978-1-935212-25-6 (e-book)

Publisher: Penguin Group, New York

Year: 2011

Price: \$13.79 (Paperback); \$8.47 (Kindle Edition) (Available from www.Amazon.com)

You also will be asked to access, read and discuss a number of relevant articles that will be available on our class Facebook page.

Because the business environment is constantly changing, all corporate crisis communications participants should be reading *The Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Financial Times* either as newspapers or online, as well as business publications such as *BusinessWeek*, *Fortune*, *Harvard Business Review*, and the *Economist*.

You will also be expected to use online research tools for your Pre-Crisis Intelligence Project (PIP), one of the four assignments on which you will be graded.

LIBRARY RESOURCES FOR MPPR-810-01

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/researchcourseguides>

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/prcc>



ASSIGNMENTS

Your grade for the semester will be based on your performance in six areas:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Points</u>
PIP	25
BAO	20
2 Crises	20
Final	20
Participation	10
Simulation	5
TOTAL	100

1. **PIP:** A paper or papers (3-5 pages) based on your *Pre-Crisis Intelligence Project (PIP)*. The paper will (a) explain the PIP purpose and the procedure you used to detect, log and categorize symptoms (pre-crisis developments) in your assigned PIP company; (b) analyze the findings of your scans over a period of at least 30 days, to detect a trend line of symptoms related to the company; and (c) apply your findings to predict a possible/probable crisis outcome if the trend line continues. Your paper should point to crisis outcomes that can be addressed by crisis communications strategies, but it is not necessary in this paper to recommend such strategies. (Note that only one paper, which should be submitted at the end of the first 30 days of the PIP, is **required for a grade**; however, this paper may subsequently be revised and re-submitted as many as three times during the course -- each 30 days -- with the last submitted version scored for grade point value.) In our experience, most students decide to submit 3 papers over the 90-day period.

This project and paper is worth **25 points**.

2. **BAO:** A position paper (5-7 pages) focused on a *Best Achievable Outcome (BAO)* that will analyze a crisis case study covered during the course (either in the course reading materials *or a case presented by one of the class guest lecturers*), and will suggest how that "historic crisis" might have been affected by modern or current circumstances and technologies. To satisfy this assignment for a grade, you will select a crisis case study from those covered in class or in assigned texts, briefly analyze the cause, response and communication strategy elements in the selected crisis studied. You will then suggest how the crisis might have been impacted if it occurred in 2016, and provide effective current communication strategies for a BAO if the crisis occurred "today," using your:
 - knowledge of current business, political and other relevant conditions,
 - knowledge of outcomes in crises since the selected crisis,
 - understanding of the availability, use and impact of current information and outreach channels (*e.g.*, social media), and any other relatable factors.

This paper is worth **20 points**.



3. **2 CRISES:** An analytical graphic (e.g., chart or table) accompanied by a discussion paper (3-5 pages), that compares and contrasts two of the crisis situations presented by guest speakers, text books or class discussions. The graphic and paper will cite and analyze:
- Cause, risks, stakeholders, and other implications in each of the situations;
 - The apparent effectiveness of communications strategies in reaching BAOs;
 - The turning point or climax in each case;
 - Reputation loss or win in each case;
 - Learnings from the crisis in each case; and
 - Commitments or steps taken by each company as the result of the crisis.

This assignment is worth **20 points**.

4. **FINAL:** The final assignment for a grade is your *Crisis Communications Plan Presentation*. To satisfy this assignment, you will select one of the following:
- a. A crisis situation involving a company that was examined in class (which could be the case study in your *BAO* paper); or
 - b. Research findings and implications of a company developed in your *PIP* paper.

You will then prepare and deliver to the class and faculty a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation, describing:

- Analysis of the cause, risks, and stakeholders,
- SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), and
- Recommendations for a clear, focused and robust crisis communications action plan, with specifics on engaging the essential elements of crisis communications covered in this course.

This plan/presentation is worth **20 points**.

5. **PARTICIPATION:** In-class participation and contributions to our class blog (Facebook page that will be established in the first week of class)

This participation is worth: **10 points**.

6. **CRISIS SIMULATION:** A crisis simulation will be conducted during the semester. Attendance is mandatory, and your individual and team response to the crisis scenario will be evaluated.

This assignment is worth: **5 points**.

Total **100 points**

GRADING

Graduate course grades include A, A-, B+, B, B-, C and F. There are no grades of C+, C- or D.

GRADING METRICS

Students will have the opportunity to earn **a total of 100 points** this semester. Reference the grading



scale (below) and the assignments descriptions:

A	100-93
A-	92-90
B+	89-87
B	86-83
B-	82-80
C	79-70
F	69.9 and below

The instructors will provide a warning by mid-semester to any student who appears to be on track for a poor final grade.

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Georgetown offers a variety of support systems for students that can be accessed on main campus or at the downtown location:

- MPS Writing Resource Program
202-687-4246
<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>
- Academic Resource Center
202-687-8354 | arc@georgetown.edu
<http://ldss.georgetown.edu/>
- Counseling and Psychiatric Services
202-687-6985
<http://caps.georgetown.edu/>
- Institutional Diversity, Equity & Affirmative Action (IDEAA)
(202) 687-4798
<https://ideaa.georgetown.edu/>

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES POLICY

Students with documented disabilities have the right to specific accommodations that do not fundamentally alter the nature of the course. Students with disabilities should contact the Academic Resource Center (202-687-8354; arc@georgetown.edu; <http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu>) before the start of classes to allow time to review the documentation and make recommendations for appropriate accommodations. If accommodations are recommended, you will be given a letter from ARC to share with your professors. You are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance.



GEORGETOWN HONOR SYSTEM

All students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic and personal integrity in pursuit of their education at Georgetown. Academic dishonesty in any form is a serious offense, and students found in violation are subject to academic penalties that include, but are not limited to, failure of the course, termination from the program, and revocation of degrees already conferred. All students are held to the Honor Code. The Honor Code pledge follows:

In the pursuit of the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life, I commit myself to respect and uphold the Georgetown University Honor System: To be honest in any academic endeavor, and To conduct myself honorably, as a responsible member of the Georgetown community, as we live and work together.

PLAGIARISM

Stealing someone else's work is a terminal offense in the workplace, and it will wreck your career in academia, too. Students are expected to work with integrity and honesty in all their assignments. The Georgetown University Honor System defines plagiarism as "the act of passing off as one's own the ideas or writings of another." More guidance is available through the Gervase Programs at <http://gervaseprograms.georgetown.edu/honor/system/53377.html>. If you have any doubts about plagiarism, paraphrasing and the need to credit, check out <http://www.plagiarism.org>.

SYLLABUS MODIFICATION

The syllabus may change to accommodate discussion of emerging topics. Also, the schedules of guest speakers may require some shifting of the agenda. The instructors will make every effort to provide as much advance notice as possible for any alterations.



COURSE SCHEDULE

Classes are held on Thursdays, at 5:20 PM. Guest Lecturers enhance the course by bringing their experiences and perspectives on managing modern enterprise crises. **A precise schedule of outside lecturers and the class assignments will be provided on the first day of class, January 12th.** Below is a preliminary class-by-class outline of the semester. Book assignments may change.

	Date	Focus	Assignments
1	January 12	Semester Overview: The Big Picture of Corporate Crisis Communication	PIP Companies Assigned; Read Chapters 1-2 <i>Damage Control</i>
2	January 19	Class Definition of Corporate Crisis	Read Chapter 11 <i>Leadership in Communication</i>
3	January 26		Read Chapter 13 <i>Leadership in Communication</i>
4	February 2		PIP#1 Due; Read Chapters 3-6 <i>Damage Control;</i> Chapter 12 <i>Leadership in Communication</i>
5	February 9		Read Chapters 7-10 <i>Damage Control</i>
6	February 16	Case Studies of the Classics	BAO Due; Read Chapters 11-13 <i>Damage Control</i>
7	February 23		Read Chapters 14-15 <i>Damage Control</i>
8	March 2	In the Hot Seat: Role Play	PIP#2 Due; Divide into teams for the Final Presentation
	March 9	Spring Break – NO CLASS	
9	March 16		
10	March 23		Read Chapters 16-17 <i>Damage Control</i>
11	March 30	Easter Break – NO CLASS	
12	April 6		
13	April 20	Case Studies of the Classics	2 Crises Due
14	April 27	Cyber Security Crisis: Role Play	
	May 4	Study Days – NO CLASS	
15	May 11	Final Presentations	Final Presentations Due

We will also apply readings, case studies and discussions on strategy and leadership to further enable your knowledge of corporate crisis communications and your ability to think as a CCO in an enterprise executive capacity, forming and guiding effective leadership communication.

Professional Standards and Values: Please review and understand the Arthur W. Page Society Principles. Many of the guest speakers are our colleagues in this important leadership organization. In the index of our textbook, *Leadership Communication* (Business Expert Press), you will find references to



Arthur W. Page Society, and AWPS. For direct access to the Page Society and the Page Principles, see <http://www.awpagesociety.com/site/about/pageprinciples/>. Useful professional guidance within the context of this course is also found within the PRSA Member Statement of Professional Values and Ethics Pledge (www.prsa.org), and the IABC Code of Ethics for Professional Communicators (<http://www.iabc.com/about/code.htm>).

Additional References:

- Harvard Business Review on Crisis Management, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 2000
- Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, by Steven Fink, iUniverse, Inc., Lincoln, NE, paperback, 2002 (Originally published by American Management Association, 1986)
- Damage Control: How to Get the Upper Hand When Your Business is Under Attack, by Eric Dezenhall and John Weber, Penguin Group, New York, paperback, 2004
- Glass Jaw: A Manifesto for Defending Fragile Reputations in an Age of Instant Scandal, by Eric Dezenhall, Hachette Book Group, 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, hardback, 2014
- Reputation: Realizing Value from the Corporate Image, by Charles J. Fombrun, Harvard Business School Press, Boston, 1996
- Fame and Fortune: How Successful Companies Build Corporate Reputations, by Charles Fombrun and Cees Van Riel, Financial Times/Prentice-Hall, 2004
- Crisis Response, edited by Jack Gottschalk, Gale Research, 1993
- Crisis Communication: A Case Book Approach, by K. Fearn-Banks, 3rd edition, Routledge, 2009
- Crisis in Organizations: Managing and Communicating in the Heat of Chaos, by Laurence Barton, SouthWestern Publishing Company, 2001
- Strategic Reputation Risk Management, by Judy Larkin, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003
- The Essential Guide to Managing Corporate Crises: A Step-by-Step Handbook for Surviving Major Catastrophes, by Ian Mitroff, Oxford University Press, 1996
- Communicating When Your Company is Under Siege: Surviving Public Crisis, by Marion K. Pinsdorf, Lexington Books, 1987
- The Resilient Enterprise, by Yossi Sheffi, MIT Press, 2005
- Risk Issues and Crisis Management, by Michael Register and Judy Larkin, Kogan Page, 1997
- Going Green: How to Communicate Your Company's Environmental Commitment, by E. Bruce Harrison, Business One Irwin, 1993



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- Seven Lessons for Leading in Crisis, by Bill George, Jossey-Bass (Wiley), 2009
- When It Hits The Fan: Managing the Nine Crises of Business, by Gerald C. Meyers with John Holusha, New American Library, 1986
- Digital Strategies for Powerful Corporate Communications by Paul A. Argenti and Courtney M. Barnes, McGraw-Hill, Hardcover, 2009.

Compiled by faculty, Crisis Communications: E. Bruce Harrison and Judith Muhlberg