MPPR-756-01: DIGITAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY: MPS-Public Relations and Corporate Communications
Tuesday, 8-10:30 p.m. | Spring 2015

Instructor: Dan Webber
Downtown campus
  • Office hours are by appointment.

COURSE OVERVIEW
Responding to scrutiny during a crisis is nothing new. Social media, however, amplifies the coverage and consequently the risk to reputation. Considering the magnitude, variety and lifecycle of these risks, traditional crisis responses that are limited to media relations responses no longer suffice. Today, communicators that are best-equipped for such crises are those who can develop and apply a multi-faceted and multi-channel strategy that not only protects their brand, but enhances it. This class equips students with the knowledge on how to use various tools, techniques and technology to successfully anticipate and navigate online firestorms and prepare themselves and their employers for the potential outcomes.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Through a variety of hands-on exercises, case studies and live drills, students will develop a disciplined approach to prepare for, navigate and overcome digital issues that start or spread online. Skills and knowledge attained from previous digital and social media classes will be tested as students:

• Navigate crisis scenarios in a digital environment
• Analyze recent crisis case studies

By the completion of the course, students will be able to:
• Understand the fluid operating realities and context of digital crises;
• Clearly identify and track issues online;
• Assess the significance of an issue;
• Develop a sound response strategy that utilizes a number of online tools and digital channels; and
• Confidently translate that knowledge into action.

REQUIRED READING*

• Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social and Beyond
  Ron Jones
  John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
ATTDANCE
As outlined by the university, 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 for 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.

Punctual attendance is critical. If you have to miss a class – family emergency, medical emergency or other act of God – you must let the instructors know in advance and work out a proposal for making up whatever work you will miss. Exceptions will be made only in extraordinary circumstances.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE, CLASS PARTICIPATION AND OTHER GUIDELINES
A successful class depends on the active engagement of all students. Students should turn off all cell phones, pagers or other communication devices 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.
• Be on time.
• Mobile phones and tablet use should only be used for class-related activities; silence mobile phones and mute any reminders on computers and other devices.
• Feel free to use your computers, but instant messaging and chat-software is prohibited; personal use of social media channels outside of the topic of discussion or focus is prohibited.
• Feel free to call me Dan or Mr. Webber.
• Audio or video recording class discussion, presentations and lectures is prohibited.
• We will not likely take a break during each class, but feel free to use the restroom as needed.
• Please ask questions during class and feel empowered to raise your hand and share experiences, perspective or reactions to topics being discussed.
• If for some reason you need to leave early then please let me know beforehand and sit near the door to minimize any distraction. This should not be a regular occurrence.
• Given the evening hours it is okay to bring food or drink into the classroom, but be mindful of whether it will distract other students or presenters. If it does, I will ask you to leave the room or discard it in the hallway trashcan.

ASSIGNMENTS
There are 10 weekly writing assignments for this class and two project-based writing assignments. Your assignments should meet Georgetown University’s standard of excellence. Specific requirements will be distributed for each written assignment. General requirements include the following:
• Include name, course number and assignment title.
• Cite references; refer to APA Style for Electronic Media (www.apastyle.org).
• Bring one hard copy of your assignment to class the day it is due.

When appropriate, feedback on assignments will be provided within two weeks of the assignment deadline. I will make myself available to discuss feedback on assignments, when needed.
• Do not ask for extensions on assignments, I do not offer them. Get me what you can by the due date/time.
• Do not ask for extra credit, I provide extra credit at the beginning of the semester and will not offer other opportunities.
• I will not offer incomplete grades, except in the most exceptional, unforeseeable circumstances. Job requirements do not qualify.
• Assignments are due by the start of each class unless otherwise noted.
• You are responsible for classroom information and materials, whether you are present in class or not. If you miss a class it is your responsibility to make arrangement to obtain class notes and materials. All class PowerPoint slides and materials will be posted.

1. **Weekly Class Feedback Form and class participation:**
Students will be asked to fill out a feedback form and discussion analysis survey by the beginning of the next class for 10 classes (indicated in the calendar below). This will be a 1-2 page analysis on the previous class responding to questions on topics discussed during the lecture, from the readings and observations on the overall presentation. The goal of this activity is to help evolve the conversation from
To gain the full benefit of this class, your attention and participation is critical. This class only works if there is open dialogue and sharing of ideas around readings, individual research, the materials presented in class and through your own contributions to our discussion. This includes participating in class discussion, in working groups as determined, sharing feedback and thoughts included in the Weekly Class Feedback Form each week.

Additionally, one of the main principles we will discuss during this class is the importance of building “muscle memory” in preparing for crises. This will help you build confidence should you ever need to respond to a crisis in your careers or as we go through “simulated crisis drills” in class. As such, following the weekly discussion of the Class Feedback Form, one to three volunteers will spin the “Crisis Wheel Du Jour” and be presented with a short crisis situation. They will then be asked to talk through their thought process in front of the class on what are the important issues that this particular situation presents, what they might do to respond and some key considerations that need to be taken.

Finally, at one or two points during the Spring Session, the regular class presentation will be interrupted and the class will be put into a crisis simulation. Each simulation will take 15-45 minutes and will require the team to break up into rapid response teams simulating their response strategies and supporting tactics. These situations are not real, but will encourage students to apply learnings, readings and class presentations, as appropriate.

2. Case Study Project:
To be assigned on week #3 and due the beginning of class on week #6. This will be a 2–6 page analysis on a particular current or recent crisis situation (within the last 12 months). Students will need to develop an analysis snapshot of the situation, interpret what the data means and provide a recommendation on potential next steps as if they were presenting this information to a company CEO, organization president or other institution leader (e.g., CMO, CCO, General Counsel, elected government official, commanding officer, etc.). Students will be allowed to choose their case study topic/area of focus based on current events or recent events, but all issues must already be public (no private issues or confidential information can be discussed). Students will need to develop a data-driven report on the reach of the issue, assess the potential impact and provide recommendations on what should be done (or should have been done for issues that have already occurred) along with clear rationale behind each recommendation. I am looking for your understanding of the concepts we are learning in class and your assessment of how organizations are using or can use these.

3. Digital Crisis Plan:
Write a 10-20 page digital crisis management plan for a company/organization using the framework you learned throughout the semester. You will receive detailed grading criteria prior to the assignment due date, so you know exactly what to include and how each element will be graded. It is encouraged that the plan be based on your own company/organization or the company/organization selected for the case study project, but can also be another company/organization if preferred. The digital crisis management plan can be developed for a specific anticipated issue/threat or it can be a broad plan that
addresses reputational risk on a broad-scale level. The final project will be due on week #14, so there will be ample time to prepare your work and ask questions beforehand.

4. Full Crisis Simulation:
As a culmination of everything learned during the semester, the class will be put into a full crisis simulation experience on the last day of classes. The class will be divided into groups and will be expected to respond to the situation(s) as they evolve. This simulation might include a variety of different social media channels, technology, actors, and other surprises to make the drill as real as possible.

Team Work
Team work is a strong component of this class and will benefit you tremendously as you rely on your classmates. I encourage team work to brainstorm ideas on papers, final projects, etc. We will also work in teams for regular class exercises.

Extra Credit Opportunity
The National Incident Management System (NIMS) is the first-ever standardized approach to incident management and response. Developed by the Department of Homeland Security at the request of the President and released in March 2004, it establishes a uniform set of processes and procedures that emergency responders at all levels will use to conduct response operations.

NIMS integrates effective practices in emergency response into a comprehensive national framework for incident management, enabling a more effective and efficient response to manage domestic incidents no matter what the cause, size or complexity, including catastrophic acts of terrorism and disasters.

To better align with government agencies and to adopt best practices, many organizations in the private sector have adopted NIMS incident management and response processes and procedures. Should any of you be involved in responding to crises in the future that might activate NIMS it is helpful to have certifications already in place. In order to get the full extra credit you will need to complete the following online courses and email me copies of the certification you receive. Partial extra credit points are included below – please send me those certifications by email too. All courses are free and can be completed at your own pace.

- **NIMS IS-700.a**: NIMS, An Introduction *(4 points extra credit)*
  [http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700a.asp](http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700a.asp) (estimated 3 hours)

- **NIMS IS-702.a**: Public Information Systems *(4 points extra credit)*

- **NIMS IS-100.b**: Introduction to Incident Command System *(8 points extra credit)*
  [http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100b.asp](http://training.fema.gov/emiweb/is/is100b.asp) (estimated 3 hours)

- **IS-42**: Social Media in Emergency Management *(4 points extra credit)*
GRADING
Your course grade will be based on the following:

60 points – Weekly Class Feedback Form and class participation
50 points – Case Study Project (crisis snapshot)
50 points – Digital crisis plan
40 points – Full crisis simulation (last class)
20 points – National Incident Management System Online Training/Certification (extra credit)

Total 200 points

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

A 100-93
A- 92-90
B+ 89-88
B 87-83
B- 82-80
C 79-70
F 69-0

The instructor 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/

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://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm) 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 journalism, 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE/TOPIC</th>
<th>READING DUE</th>
<th>ASSIGNMENT DUE</th>
<th>IN-CLASS ACTIVITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 1 (Tuesday, 1/13)</td>
<td>Class Syllabus</td>
<td>Order books and download readings</td>
<td>Course purpose and overview</td>
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<td>Digital complications: new realities in crisis communications management and how crisis management has changed</td>
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<td>Questions about syllabus and course</td>
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<td>WEEK 2 (Tuesday, 1/20)</td>
<td>Storify by FUTUREPerspective: Top PR Crises in 2013 (Pick 10 stories that interest you) <a href="http://storify.com/FUTUREPersp/top-pr-crises-in-2013">http://storify.com/FUTUREPersp/top-pr-crises-in-2013</a></td>
<td>Questions about syllabus and course</td>
<td>Crisis wheel du jour</td>
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<td>Altimeter Group: Social business Readiness: How Advanced Companies Prepare Internally (August 30, 2011) <a href="http://www.slideshare.net/jeremiah_owyang/social-readiness-how-advanced-companies-prepare">http://www.slideshare.net/jeremiah_owyang/social-readiness-how-advanced-companies-prepare</a></td>
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<td>It’s been an interesting week</td>
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<td>WEEK 3 (Tuesday, 1/27)</td>
<td>Radian6 Webinar: Social Media Crisis Management with Shel Holtz (Video 1 hour 13 min.) <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NKmFsGKq4&amp;feature=youtu.be">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NKmFsGKq4&amp;feature=youtu.be</a></td>
<td>Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#1)</td>
<td>Crisis wheel du jour</td>
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<td>Do or do not, there is no try: spotting issues before they become crises – a look at monitoring and analysis from a crisis perspective</td>
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<td>It’s been an interesting week</td>
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<td>Case study assigned</td>
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| WEEK 5 (Tuesday, 2/10) | Community management: navigating issues and crises during attacks | Gillin and Gianforte (2012). *Attack of the Customers*  
Read:  
• Chapter 1 – When Customers Attack  
• Chapter 2 – How Attacks Happen  
• Chapter 3 – Studies in Social Media Crises  
• Chapter 4 – Why Customers Attack  
• Chapter 5 – The Attackers  
• Chapter 6 – Ordinance | Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#3) | Crisis wheel du jour It’s been an interesting week Lecture modules |
Read:  
• Chapter 1 – Keyword Research History and Its Evolving Role in Marketing  
• Chapter 2 – How to Develop a Successful Keyword Strategy  
• Chapter 3 – Keyword Research Tools  
• Chapter 4 – Finding Keywords  
• Chapter 5 – Refine Your Initial List of Keywords in Seven Steps | Case study project | | |
| WEEK 7 (Tuesday, 2/24) | Ron Jones (2012). *Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social and Beyond.* Read:  
• Chapter 6 – Using Keywords for SEO  
• Chapter 7 – Using Keywords for PPC  
• Chapter 8 – Using Keywords for Social Media | Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#5) | Crisis wheel du jour  
It’s been an interesting week  
Lecture modules |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SEO and SEM in action – a series of case studies and hands-on exercises | Ron Jones (2012). *Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social and Beyond.* Read:  
• Chapter 10 – Keywords and Site Architecture | None |  |
| WEEK 8 (Tuesday, 3/3) | Ron Jones (2012). *Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social and Beyond.* Read:  
• Chapter 11 – Creating Great Content with Keywords  
• Chapter 12 – Using Keywords for Branding and Messaging | Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#6) | Crisis wheel du jour  
It’s been an interesting week  
Lecture modules |
| Dark properties, microsites, web assets, virtual war rooms | Ron Jones (2012). *Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social and Beyond.* Read:  
• Chapter 11 – Creating Great Content with Keywords  
• Chapter 12 – Using Keywords for Branding and Messaging | None |  |
**Product number:**  
HKS729-PDF-ENG | None | Crisis wheel du jour  
It’s been an interesting week  
Lecture modules  
Digital crisis plan assigned |
| WEEK 9 (Tuesday, 3/17) | Ron Jones (2012). *Keyword Intelligence: Keyword Research for Search, Social and Beyond.* Read:  
• Chapter 11 – Creating Great Content with Keywords  
• Chapter 12 – Using Keywords for Branding and Messaging | None |  |
| How to shape content for social media in crisis; the voice of your response and where you put your content |  
**Bold Steps in Connecting PR and Wikipedia,**  
**A Lesson in PR Ethics and** | Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#7) | Crisis wheel du jour  
It’s been an interesting week  
Lecture modules |
Read:  
• [Bold Steps in Connecting PR and Wikipedia](http://www.iabc.com/cwb/archive/2012/0912/)  
• [A Lesson in PR Ethics and](http://www.iabc.com/cwb/archive/2012/0912/) | Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#7) | Crisis wheel du jour  
It’s been an interesting week  
Lecture modules |
### WEEK 11 (Tuesday, 3/31)
**Wikipedia, forums and reviews continued – case studies and hands-on exercise**

**Read:**
- Chapter 7 – Customer as Critic – The Power of Peer Reviews (Gillin and Gianforte, 2012). *Attack of the Customers*
- Fake it Till You Make it: Reputation, Competition, and Yelp Review Fraud (Luca and Zervas, 2013).

**Internet Materials:**
- *MotherBoard*: Meet the PR guru who wants to help corporations get heard on Wikipedia

**Lecture modules:**
- Crisis wheel du jour
- It’s been an interesting week
- Join the Corporate Representatives for Ethical Wikipedia Engagement (CREWE) Facebook group

**Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#8)**

### WEEK 12 (Tuesday, 4/7)
**Recovery: how a thoughtful social media program can help pick up the pieces and restore trust post-crisis**

**Internet Materials:**
- SocialMedia.org: Rogers Communications: Haters Can Be Lovers, presented by Keith McArthur – March 27, 2012 (Video: 29 min.)
  - [http://vimeo.com/42370339](http://vimeo.com/42370339)
- Harvard Business Publishing: Domino’s Pizza (Jana Seijts, Paul Bigus) Sep. 9, 2011 $6.95 (4 pages)
  - Product number: W11159-PDF-ENG

**Lecture modules:**
- Crisis wheel du jour
- It’s been an interesting week
- Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#8)
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Tuesday, 4/28 - No class due to holiday**

**WEEK 15 (Tuesday, 5/5)**

| Tying it all together – full crisis drill | Review lecture notes and readings from semester; prep any materials needed in advance | Weekly class feedback form and discussion analysis survey (#10) | Full crisis drill |

* Please note, the nature of this course requires that students react to issues or crises that might be breaking as they occur. Therefore subject matter and readings may adjust slightly to stay as relevant as possible. Additionally, travel and speaker schedules may cause some date shifts and revisions to the syllabus. All changes will be communicated in class and be accompanied by an email from the instructor.