American Public University System

The Ultimate Advantage is an Educated Mind

Public Service and Health **EDMG 612** **Risk & Crisis Communication** **Credit Hours: 3** **Length of Course: 8 weeks** **Prerequisite: none**

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Instructor Information

Instructor: APUS Faculty

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Course Description (Catalog)

This course provides the student an arsenal of useable tools and techniques that are universally prescriptive and can be implemented in nearly every risk-associated situation, from public health to accidents to terrorist attacks and even to challenges to corporate reputation management. Students who complete this course will be prepared to make the best possible

decisions during a crisis emergency about the effected population's well being, and communicate those decisions, within nearly impossible time constraints, and ultimately, to accept the imperfect nature of choices as the situation evolves.

Course Scope

During this term, you will study the theories and concepts associated with risk and crisis communication. Concurrently, as each week of theory is examined, you will be applying that knowledge to a component of a case study on a risk/crisis communication scenario of your choice, which will allow you to immediately translate what you've studied to the real world. This case study will be of a crisis or potential crisis that you will examine from the aspect of how well or poorly risk and crisis communication were achieved. You may select from any of the following cases without further discussion:

- Hurricane Sandy

- Penn State

- The pandemic flu threat

- The anthrax threat and response

- The BP Deepwater Horizon event

- Global warming impacts

If you wish to develop a case study of a less well-documented or workplace level event, please begin a conversation with the instructor. Each week there will be an assignment due. The first portion of the typical assignment will be your interpretation of the readings for the week. The second portion will be how those theories would, did, or should have applied to your chosen case study.

Course Objectives

After successfully completing this course, you will be able to:

CO-1: Explore the theory of risk and crisis communication.

CO-2: Operationalize the role of risk communications and assess how emergency risk and crisis communication concepts apply to crisis events.

CO-3: Diagnose the psychology of a public health or other emergency and what messages the public will need from the leadership and spokespersons.

CO-4: Organize and apply the components of crisis communication planning and tools, including problem definition, analysis, and implementation of intervention, evaluation, and feedback.

CO-5: Compare various perceptions of risk and assess effective communications strategies.

CO-6: Evaluate the role of the media and public in homeland security.

CO-7: Evaluate how local, state, and federal emergency response and recovery operations (including governmental and nongovernmental organizations) should communicate among themselves, to the public, and to their stakeholders.

CO-8: Evaluate the overall importance of ongoing crisis communication.

Course Delivery Method

This course delivered via distance learning will enable students to complete academic work in a flexible manner, completely online. Course materials and access to an online learning management system will be made available to each student. Online assignments are due by Sunday evening of the week as noted and include Forum questions (accomplished in groups through a threaded platform), examination, and individual assignments submitted for review by the Faculty Member). Assigned faculty will support the students throughout this eight-week course.

Course Materials

Required Course Textbooks: Coombs, T. W. (2012). *Ongoing crisis communication: Planning, managing, and responding (3rd ed).* Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks.

Required Readings: n/a

Additional Resources: n/a

Websites:

In addition to the required course texts the following public domain Websites are useful. Please abide by the university's academic honesty policy when using Internet sources as well. Note web site addresses are subject to change.

Site Name	Website URL/Address
Center for Disease Control (N.D.) *Crisis, Emergency, & Risk Communication (CERC).*	http://www.bt.cdc.gov/cerc/CERConline/index2.html

Evaluation Procedures

Describe how you will evaluate your students for each graded activity:

Reading Assignments: n/a

Supplemental Readings: n/a

Forum Assignments: There will be four graded forums in the class. Students will provide an original posting and discuss each other's postings. Work will be graded on both quantity and quality of participation.

Homework Assignments: There will be a number of weekly assignments that consist of reaction papers. Papers will be graded on quality of writing, formatting, and interpretation of the concepts studied.

Exams/Quizzes: There is one graded quiz that helps the student understand expectations and prepare for the class.

Field Experience Assignments: n/a

Final Project: The final product of the class is distributed throughout the weekly papers. This project will evaluate a risk/crisis communication case study of the student's choice with respect to the class concepts.

Grade Instruments	Percentage
Quiz Zero	**4**
Forums	**16**
Weekly Reaction Papers / Case Analysis	**80**
Total	**100**

8 – Week Course Outline

Please see the Student Handbook to reference the University's grading scale

Week	Topic	Learning Objectives	Readings	Assignments
1	**Introduction & Background**	CO-1	Coombs Chapters 1 & 2. From the CDC CERC website, examine the material under the 'Core Principles' and 'Tools' buttons.	Quiz Zero Forum One Assignment One
2	**Pre-crisis Communication & Planning**	CO-2 CO-3	Coombs, Chapters 3, 4, 5, & 6. From the CDC CERC website, examine the material under the 'Crisis Communication Plan' and 'Human Resources for Crisis Communication' buttons.	Forum Two – Three Assignment Two
3	**The Event & Initial Reactions**	CO-2 CO-4	Coombs Chapters 7 & 8. From the CDC CERC website, examine the material under the 'Psychology of a Crisis' button.	Forum Two – Three Assignment Three

4	**The Spokesperson & Stakeholders**	CO-4 CO-5	From the CDC CERC website, examine the material under the 'Role of the Spokesperson' and 'Stakeholder/Partner Communications' buttons.	Forum Four – Five Assignment Four
5	**Messages & Credibility**	CO-5 CO-6	From the CDC CERC website, examine the material under the 'Working with the Media' and 'Messages & Audiences' buttons.	Forum Four – Five Assignment Five
6	**Press Release Exercise**	CO-2 CO-4 CO-7	n/a	Forum Six – Seven Assignment Six
7	**Closure, Feedback, & Learning**	CO-5 CO-7 CO-8	Coombs, Chapter 9.	Forum Six - Seven Assignment Seven
8	**Conclusions & Recommendations**	CO-4 CO-8	n/a	Assignment Eight

Policies

Please see the Student Handbook to reference all University policies. Quick links to frequently asked question about policies are listed below.

Drop/Withdrawal Policy
Plagiarism Policy
Extension Process and Policy
Disability Accommodations

Writing Expectations
Writing must be clear, well organized, and original. Proofreading is expected – spelling and grammatical errors destroy credibility quickly. The instructor may require papers and projects to be uploaded to turnitin.com for originality verification at the instructor's discretion. Typically, final papers will require upload to turnitin.com.

Citation and Reference Style

Attention Please: Students will follow APA as the sole citation and reference style used in written work submitted as part of coursework to the University. Assignments completed in a narrative essay or composition format must follow the citation style cited in APA.

Late Assignments
Students are expected to submit classroom assignments by the posted due date and to complete the course according to the published class schedule. As adults, students, and working professionals it is understand you must manage competing demands on your time. Should you need additional time to complete an assignment please contact me before the due date so we can discuss the situation and determine an acceptable resolution. Routine submission of late assignments is unacceptable and may result in points deducted from your final course grade.

Netiquette
Online universities promote the advance of knowledge through positive and constructive debate--both inside and outside the classroom. Discussions on the Internet, however, can occasionally degenerate into needless insults and "flaming." Such activity and the loss of good manners are not acceptable in a university setting--basic academic rules of good behavior and proper "Netiquette" must persist. Remember that you are in a place for the fun and excitement of learning that does not include descent to personal attacks, or student attempts to stifle the discussion of others.

- **Technology Limitations:** While you should feel free to explore the full-range of creative composition in your formal papers, keep e-mail layouts simple. The Educator classroom may not fully support MIME or HTML encoded messages, which means that bold face, italics, underlining, and a variety of color-coding or other visual effects will not translate in your e-mail messages.
- **Humor Note:** Despite the best of intentions, jokes and--especially--satire can easily get lost or taken seriously. If you feel the need for humor, you may wish to add "emoticons" to help alert your readers: ;-), :), ☺

Disclaimer Statement
Course content may vary from the outline to meet the needs of this particular group.

Online Library

The Online Library is available to enrolled students and faculty from inside the electronic campus. This is your starting point for access to online books, subscription periodicals, and Web resources that are designed to support your classes and generally not available through search engines on the open Web. In addition, the Online Library provides access to special learning resources, which the University has contracted to assist with your studies. Questions can be directed to **librarian@apus.edu**.

- **Charles Town Library and Inter Library Loan:** The University maintains a special library with a limited number of supporting volumes, collection of our professors' publication, and services to search and borrow research books and articles from other libraries.
- **Electronic Books:** You can use the online library to uncover and download over 50,000 titles, which have been scanned and made available in electronic format.
- **Electronic Journals:** The University provides access to over 12,000 journals, which are available in electronic form and only through limited subscription services.
- **Smarthinking:** Students have access to ten free hours of tutoring service per year through **Smarthinking**. Tutoring is available in the following subjects: math (basic math through advanced calculus), science (biology, chemistry, and physics), accounting, statistics, economics, Spanish, writing, grammar, and more. Additional information is located in the Online Library. From the Online Library home page, click on either the "Writing Center" or "Tutoring Center" and then click "Smarthinking." All login information is available.

Request a Library Guide for your course (http://apus.libguides.com/index.php)
The AMU/APU Library Guides provide access to collections of trusted sites on the Open Web and licensed resources on the Deep Web. These are specially tailored for academic research at APUS:

- Program Portals contain topical and methodological resources to help launch general research in the degree program. To locate, search by department name or navigate by school.
- Course Lib-Guides narrow the focus to relevant resources for the corresponding course. To locate, search by class code (e.g., SOCI111) or class name.

If a guide you need isn't available yet, let us know by emailing the APUS Library: librarian@apus.edu

Selected Bibliography