

STCM 30000: Crisis Communication
Fall 2017
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TEXTBOOKS:

Fearn-Banks, K. (2017). *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (5th ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Seeger, M. W., & Sellnow, T. L. (2016). *Narratives of crisis: Telling stories of ruin and renewal*. Stanford, CA: Stanford Business Books.

Selected readings on SAKAI.

COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Crisis communication is focused on both the process and the end result (product) of strategic communication efforts. The course explores the issues that develop in pre, during and post-crisis phases, competencies for communicating with various stakeholders, the stories individuals tell, and the dynamics of managing a crisis in an era of social media with an integrated crisis communication plan. Therefore, upon completion of the class, each student will be able to:

- **Define** different types of crises and emergent communication issues, especially social media, through readings and discussion of social media crisis communication case study
- **Apply** course ideas, concepts, and theories to a recent or past crisis, measured by a narrative analysis
- **Understand** multiple layers/levels of communication during a crisis, measured by interviewing a practitioner and reporting about communication competencies needed during a crisis
- **Design** effective and appropriate messages, measured by the creation of a Crisis Communication plan
- **Integrate** understanding and knowledge of how to manage a crisis, as measured by participation in a crisis simulation
- **Reflect** on what was learning, through taking a pre-test and a post-test

This course satisfies the following National Communication Association's Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC):

- *LOC #2: Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts*
- *LOC #4: Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context*
- *LOC #6: Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1. Pre-test. This is given to collect baseline knowledge. No grade associated with this test. At the end of the semester, this test will be returned to be used when completing the Final Exam/Post Test.

2. Social media crisis communication case study: Apply the STREMI model to a recent or currently unfolding crisis. This model represents a cyclical process of six interconnected elements that can assist organizations in monitoring and responding to the social media landscape as they communicate with stakeholders via social media, in an effective or ineffective way, before, during and after a crisis. This assignment is worth 10% of the total 500 course points or 50 pts, and is group based, meaning everyone receives the same grade.

3. Narrative analysis: Apply Seeger & Sellnow's (2016) narrative framework to a crisis event. In doing so, students will be able to explain how humans "come to understand and make sense of uncertain situations . . . carry meaning, encode lessons, and frame larger public and societal understandings of risk, warnings, and potential harm" (p. 1-5). This is an individual assignment and is worth 20% of the total 500 course points or 100 pts.

4. Communication competency paper: Report the communicative competencies for handling, managing a crisis situation, from the perspective of a practitioner who works in the public relations, media relations, or crisis/risk communication field. This assignment is team based and worth 20% of the total 500 course points or 100 pts

5. Crisis communication plan: Create a crisis communication plan for a specific organization, using the steps and guidelines identified by Kathleen Fearn-Banks, taking into consideration audience and context. This assignment is worth 40% of the total 500 course points or 200 pts, and is group based, meaning everyone receives the same grade.

6. Simulation and Post Test: The goal of this simulated crisis is for the class, acting as an organization, to experience the dynamics of an unexpected situation, and to go through the process of resolving the crisis by identifying appropriate publics and creating appropriate communication (traditional and social media) strategies. After the simulation and debriefing, the pre-test from the beginning of the semester is returned to the students to answer what they would do if involved in a crisis situation in the future. No grade is assigned for participating in the simulation. An individual grade is assigned for the post-test and is worth 10% of the total 500 course points or 50 pts.

TENTATIVE COURSE OUTLINE/SCHEDULE:**

**Tentative because it may need to be changed. Should any changes occur, you will be notified as soon as possible

KEY TO READINGS:

FB= Kathleen Fearn-Banks—*Crisis communications: A casebook approach*

S & S= Seeger & Sellnow—*Narratives of crisis*

ROS= Readings on SAKAI

| DATE | TOPIC | READINGS | ASSIGNMENTS DUE |
|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------|--|
| 1st class | Introductions | | |
| Week 2 | Overview (Why is this class in the school of communication)? | Guest speaker: Alumna | |
| | What is crisis communication today? | FB: CH 1 & ROS | |
| Week 3 | Impact of technology and social media | FB: CH 5 & ROS | |
| | How do we prevent crises? | FB: CH 3 | Guest Speaker: Office of Public Safety |
| Week 4 | What happens when crises strike? | FB: CH 4 | |
| | Day to work on social media crisis case study | | |
| Week 5 | Intro into storytelling | S & S: CHs 1 & 2 | Social media crisis communication case study due |
| | What stories are told? | S & S: CHs 3 & 4 | |
| Week 6 | Blame narrative | S & S: CH 5 | |
| | Renewal narrative; Victim narrative | S & S: CH6 & 7 | |
| Week 7 | Hero and Memorial narrative | S & S: CH 8 & 9 | |
| | Guest speakers —Office of Marketing Communication | | |
| Week 8 | Discuss the narrative analysis; Break into groups for communication competency paper | | Narrative analysis due |
| Week 9 | How to manage domestic/foreign crises? | FB: CHS 7 & 8 | |
| | How to manage environmental/natural disasters? | FB: CHS 9 & 10 | |
| Week 10 | How to manage transportation crises? | FB: CH 11 & ROS | |
| | How to manage product tampering/ failure? | FB: CH 12 | |
| Week 11 | What to say/how, when death/injury occur? | FB: CH 13 | |
| | Day to work on Comm. Competency paper | | |

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| Week 12 | Discuss the comm. competency papers; Break into groups for the Crisis Communication Plan | FB: CH 14 | Comm. Competency Paper due |
| | Day to work in groups | | |
| Week 13 | Day to work in groups | | |
| | Day to work in groups | | |
| Week 14 | Day to work in groups | | |
| | Discussion of Crisis Communication plans | | Crisis Communication Plan due |
| Week 15 | Crisis Simulation | | |
| | Debrief crisis simulation | Fill out evaluation | Pre-tests returned |

Final Exam week. Post Test Due