

Spring 2025 Syllabus: Crisis Communications – PUR4400C

Section: 26033

Professor: Alisha Katz, APR

Contact information: alisha.katz@ufl.edu, 352.284.1515 (best by email or text)

Course Time: Asynchronous

Location: Canvas

Office Hours: Virtual office hours are held via Zoom by scheduled appointment

The syllabus is subject to change as the professor deems appropriate and necessary. All changes will be sent via Canvas announcements and posted on our Canvas page.

Prerequisite

- PUR3000 Principles of Public Relations

Reading

Required: W. Timothy Coombs, *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (6th ed.). Copyright 2023 by Sage Publications ISBN: 9781071816646

Additional Readings as Assigned

The professor will provide or assign additional reading materials (e.g., media articles or book chapters) over the course of the semester, mostly for additional information but, in some cases, these may be included in the quizzes.

Course Goals

Crisis Communications focuses on key elements of crisis and issues management – _before, during and after a crisis. In an age when a company’s every move is subject to instant, vivid, unfiltered, and global scrutiny and attack, the need for effective, proactive crisis management is greater than ever. And it is far more challenging, especially as communication technology is constantly expanding, amid multiple global crises. The structure of the course will reflect the crisis management process: pre-crisis (prevention, preparation, planning); crisis response (crisis communications and stakeholder engagement during the critical period); and post-crisis (lessons learned, corrective actions and reputation recovery). Emphasis will be placed on practical application of crisis communications theory, with copious use of real-life case studies and guest lectures by top expert practitioners. A fictitious crisis will be presented to the class with the expectation of utilizing the principles and techniques learned in class to develop a correct response and plan.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- Learn what constitutes a crisis – how it is distinct from day-to-day issues
- Develop a crisis preparedness plan and vulnerabilities assessment

- Understand how to assemble and manage a crisis management team
- Understand the typical stages of a crisis, and how social media affects the dynamics
- Identify and address the ethical issues presented by different crisis situations
- Write a crisis communications plan, including a core set of strategic messages for each key stakeholder group
- As a communications professional, how to prepare for a crisis
- Develop a post-crisis plan, which includes learnings for the organization and proof points for stakeholders on corrective actions

College of Journalism and Communications Objectives

The Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications requires that by graduation all students should be able to:

- Apply the principles and laws of freedom of speech and press, in a global context, and for the country in which the institution that invites ACEJMC is located.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the multicultural history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications.
- Demonstrate culturally proficient communication that empowers those traditionally disenfranchised in society, especially as grounded in race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability, domestically and globally, across communication and media contexts.
- Present images and information effectively and creatively, using appropriate tools and technologies.
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences, and purposes they serve.
- Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity.
- Apply critical thinking skills in conducting research and evaluating information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work.
- Effectively and correctly apply basic numerical and statistical concepts.
- Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style, and grammatical correctness.
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work

KEY COURSE POLICIES

Online Course Administration – eLearning in Canvas

<https://elearning.ufl.edu> will be used to administer the course communication, materials (e.g., PowerPoint files, additional readings, handouts, assignment guidelines, evaluation forms), and grades. For instance, an electronic file of this document is posted on Canvas. You can access the

site by using your GatorLink username and password. Please check the site for announcements and/or threads of comments from classmates, and the professor.

Instructor Interaction

The best way to reach me is by e-mail. I check my e-mail account regularly, but please do not expect a response by e-mail after normal business hours/over the weekend. If I have not written back within 48 hours, please send your email again. As my email is considered a state public record, I do not discuss grades or any student records issues via e-mail. Please schedule a meeting with me to discuss these issues. The classroom is typically not an appropriate place for these discussions.

Late or Missed Work

All written assignments must be turned in to Canvas by 11:59pm the day the assignment is due. Canvas will automatically mark assignments as late if they are uploaded even one second after 11:59pm. You have 24 hours after the due date to turn in your assignment for a 25% grade reduction, after that, no late work is accepted. It is your responsibility to make sure you properly uploaded your paper.

Other Important Notes

- Spelling counts, as do grammar, punctuation, and professional presentation techniques.
 - Please abide by AP Style.
- Please appropriately reference ALL sources you choose to incorporate into your assignments, discussions, etc.
 - Follow APA style when referencing.

Course Professionalism

The College of Journalism and Communications is a professional school and professional decorum is expected at all times. Therefore, the students, and the professor, adhere to workplace norms for collegial and respectful interaction. Carefully consider how you participate in class discussions and in the assignments you submit and present. You can use humor and demonstrate creativity but think ahead to how it will reflect on you. Use your best professional judgment. Projects should not contain nudity, profanity, illegal activities, or situations that would put you or others in danger.

Students are expected to conduct themselves in an honest, ethical, and courteous manner — with classmates and the professor.

AI Policy for Student Work

In this class, I ask that you produce all your work without generative AI's assistance. I need to ascertain what you know and what you can produce unaided on your own. The use of generative AI for your assignments in this class violates the honor code as you are presenting content as your own that was not entirely created by you. Various AI detection tools are available (built within

Canvas and externally such as ZeroGPT), and many AI platforms follow very formulaic response patterns. If I am concerned that your work is not your own, I will try to verify the originality of your work and if evidence is found that your work is AI-generated, I will submit your assignment as violating the honor code.

The Honor Pledge

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. [Click here to read the Honor Code](#). Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

I will document and report all honor code violations, including cheating and plagiarism. The minimum penalty for a violation of the honor code is a zero on the assignment, but may be higher depending on the severity of the violation.

Diversity Statement

Your experience in this class is important to me. I embrace a notion of intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along several dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, socioeconomic class, disability, age, and religion. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for others

Course Grades

Your grade will be calculated based on the following:

- Discussions: 35%
- Individual Assignments: 25%
- Quizzes: 25%
- Group Project: 15%

Discussions: Weekly discussions require close examination and reflection on weekly materials, including the weekly lecture, textbook reading and additional materials. Discussions are meant to be meaningful and create a respectful dialogue with class peers.

Individual Assignments: Individual assignments provide an opportunity to explore the intricacies of crisis communications. These assignments may include analyzing case studies, developing different components of a crisis communications strategy and more.

Quizzes: Two “open-book” quizzes will be scheduled to test knowledge and understanding of reading materials and lectures.

Final Group Project: Students will be assigned small groups to create a crisis communications plan for a company of choice. The project should be collaborative and must include all elements of a crisis communications plan.

Grading

Grading for the course follows current UF grading policies for assigning grade points (see <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

The grading scale for the course is as follows:

A = 93.0-100%.

A- = 90.0-92.99%.

B+ = 87.0-89.99%.

B = 83.0-86.99%.

B- = 80.0-82.99%.

C+ = 77.0-79.99%.

C = 74.0-76.99%.

C- = 70.0-73.99%.

D+ = 67.0-69.99%.

D = 64.0-66.99%.

D- = 60.0-63.99%.

F = below 60%

Further information about grades and grading policy may be found at [this link to the university grades and grading policies](#).

Course Schedule

Module 1: Exploring Crisis Communications (Overview)

Module 2: How Organizations Recognize a Crisis

Module 3: Ongoing Crisis Communications

Module 4: Leadership in Crisis Communications

Module 5: Crisis Preparation

Module 6: Social Media

Module 7: Social Media – Part II

Module 8: Recognizing a Crisis

Module 9: Crisis Response – Part I

Module 10: Crisis Response – Part II
Module 11: International Terrorism
Module 12: Post Crisis
Module 13: Ethics
Module 14: Social Change Stemming from Crises

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Standard UF Policy Information & Links

UF Grading Policy

<http://gradcatalog.ufl.edu/content.php?catoid=10&navoid=2020#grades>
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

Students Requiring Accommodations

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center. [Click here to get started with the Disability Resource Center](#). It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

Online Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Honor Code (<https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Software Use

All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate. We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to uphold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

Student Privacy

There are federal laws protecting your privacy with regards to grades earned in courses and on individual assignments. For more information, please

see: <http://registrar.ufl.edu/catalog0910/policies/regulationferpa.html>

Campus Resources

Health and Wellness Resources

- *U Matter, We Care*: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu, 352-392-1575, or visit [U Matter, We Care website](#) to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- *Counseling and Wellness Center*: [Visit the Counseling and Wellness Center website](#) or call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis services as well as non-crisis services.
- *Student Health Care Center*: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or [visit the Student Health Care Center website](#).
- *University Police Department*: [Visit UF Police Department website](#) or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- *UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center*: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road, Gainesville, FL 32608; [Visit the UF Health Emergency Room and Trauma Center website](#).

Academic Resources

- *E-learning technical support*: Contact the [UF Computing Help Desk](#) at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at helpdesk@ufl.edu.
- *Career Connections Center*: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services.
- *Library Support*: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352-392-6420. General study skills and tutoring.
- *Writing Studio*: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.
- *Student Complaints On-Campus*: [Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information](#).
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: [View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process](#).