



Graduate Course Syllabus

COM 557: Crisis Communication in a 24/7 World

Center: Online

Course Prerequisites

COM 620

Course Description

The pervasiveness of social media, 24-hour news coverage, and mobile communications has transformed the role of public relations specialists. What constituted “private” has become increasingly public given individuals’ immediate access to multiple platforms and technologies to publish sensitive information. Protecting a brand and maintaining a consistent message in the maelstrom of broadcasted opinions is certainly more difficult than ever before. This course addresses the topics of public relations ethics and crisis management through the investigation of landmark cases and hypothetical crisis scenarios, preparing students to develop crisis management, prevention, and response skills crucial for today’s media environment.

Course Outcomes

- Recognize and respond to crisis communication challenges by successfully implementing ethically sound strategies on new media platforms that maintain a positive brand image
- Develop an authentic response to crisis management situations through a cogent analysis of relevant case studies and real-time scenarios
- Employ innovative technologies and tactics to disseminate messages to specific target audiences about political officials, corporations, and public figures
- Evaluate social media trends and related audience reactions with an open-minded, empathetic treatment of different cultural perspectives
- Develop a responsible message integrating a contemporary knowledge base of public relations ethics, brand imaging, and contemporary media strategies

Required Materials

Using your learning resources is critical to your success in this course. Please purchase directly through SNHU's online bookstore, [MBS Direct](#), rather than any other vendor. Purchasing directly from the bookstore ensures that you will obtain the correct materials and that the Help Desk, your advisor, and the instructor can provide you with support if you have problems.

The Handbook of Crisis Communication

Coombs, W. T., and Holladay, S. J. (editors)

Wiley-Blackwell

First Edition

2012

9781444361902

Instructor Availability and Response Time

Your class interaction with your instructor and your classmates will take place in Blackboard on a regular, ongoing basis. Your instructor will be active in Blackboard at least five days a week, and you will normally communicate with your instructor in the open Blackboard discussion forum so that your questions and the instructor's answers benefit the entire class. You should send emails directly to your instructor only when you need to discuss something of a personal or sensitive nature, and in those cases your instructor will generally provide a response within 24 hours.

Grade Distribution

| Assignment Category | Number of Graded Items | Point Value per Item | Total Points |
|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Blogs | 11 | 25 | 275 |
| Short Papers | 6 | 40 | 240 |
| Final Project | | | |
| Milestone One | 1 | 35 | 35 |
| Milestone Two | 1 | 75 | 75 |
| Milestone Three | 1 | 75 | 75 |
| Final Project Submission | 1 | 300 | 300 |
| | | Total Course Points: | 1000 |

This course may also contain practice activities. The purpose of these non-graded activities is to assist you in mastering the learning outcomes in the graded activity items listed above.

University Grading System: Graduate

| <i>Total Points: 1000</i> | | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|--------|-------------------|--------------|
| Grade | Numerical Equivalent | Points | Points Equivalent | |
| | | | <i>Lower</i> | <i>Upper</i> |
| A | 93-100 | 4.00 | 930 | 1000 |
| A- | 90-92 | 3.67 | 900 | 929 |
| B+ | 87-89 | 3.33 | 870 | 899 |
| B | 83-86 | 3.00 | 830 | 869 |
| B- | 80-82 | 2.67 | 800 | 829 |
| C+ | 77-79 | 2.33 | 770 | 799 |
| C | 73-76 | 2.00 | 730 | 769 |
| F | 0-72 | 0.00 | 0 | 729 |
| I | Incomplete | | | |
| IF | Incomplete/Failure | | | |
| W | Withdrawn | | | |

*Incomplete and Incomplete/Failure: Any student requesting an "I" grade must complete a Student Petition and Contract for a Grade of Incomplete and submit it to the proper offices prior to the final day of the term/semester. The petition will specify a deadline by which the coursework must be completed. The incomplete automatically becomes an "IF" if work has not been completed and a grade has not been submitted by the specific deadline.

Grading Guides

Specific activity directions, grading guides, posting requirements, and additional deadlines can be found in the Course Information area in the Assignment Guidelines and Rubrics folder.

Weekly Assignment Schedule

The Learning Modules area in Blackboard contains one module folder for each week of the course. All reading and assignment information can be found in the folders. All assignments are due by 11:59 p.m. EST on the last day of the module week.

In addition to the textbook readings that are listed, there may be additional required resources within each module in Blackboard.

| Module | Topics and Assignments |
|--------|---|
| 1 | Icebreaker Activity (Required) Defining Crisis Communication <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 3 1-1 Blog: Changes in Communication 1-2 Final Project Document Review 1-3 Milestone One: Crisis Communication Evaluation Draft |
| 2 | Different Approaches by Different Sectors <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 2-1 Blog: Going Viral 2-2 Short Paper: Public Perception |
| 3 | The Impact on Stakeholders During and After a Crisis <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 8, 9, 10, 29, and 31 3-1 Blog: Remembering the Internal Stakeholders 3-2 Practice: Messaging for Internal Stakeholders 3-3 Short Paper: Understanding Stakeholder Needs |
| 4 | Planning for a Crisis <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 11 and 12 4-1 Blog: Essential Planning for PR/Crisis Communication 4-2 Short Paper: Reaching Your Audience Quickly |
| 5 | Controversial Cases <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 13, 15, 16, and 17 5-1 Blog: The Impact of Social Media on PR and Crisis Management 5-2 Milestone Two: SWOT Analysis Draft |
| 6 | Technology and Crisis Communication <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 14, 18, 19, and 20 6-1 Blog: Media Options 6-2 Short Paper: Tweeting Today |
| 7 | When the Crisis Becomes Global <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 21, 22, and 23 7-1 Blog: It's a Small World 7-2 Short Paper: Global Brand Crisis |
| 8 | The Contingency Theory <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 25, 26, and 27 8-1 Blog: Adaptability in Communications 8-2 Milestone Three: Campaign Redesign Draft |

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|----|--|
| 9 | Communicating Before a Crisis and Embracing Public Relations <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 28, 29, 30, and 32 9-1 Blog: Managing the Brand 9-2 Short Paper: Successful Brand Awareness |
| 10 | The Organizational Approach <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 36, 37, 38, and 39 10-1 Blog: Managing the Corporate Image 10-2 Final Project Submission: Crisis Communication Plan |
| 11 | Considering the Future of Crisis Communications <i>The Handbook of Crisis Communication</i> , Chapters 33 and 35 11-1 Blog: Looking Toward the Future—Social Adaptation to Crises |

Attendance Policy

Failure to participate during the first week of the course (12:00 a.m. Monday through 11:59 p.m. Sunday) will result in automatic withdrawal. Participation is defined as posting within a discussion board, wiki, or blog, and/or submitting an assignment. Students who do not participate during the first week forfeit their rights to be reinstated into the course.

Extended absences, defined as failure to post into the Blackboard classroom for more than five days, must be coordinated with the instructor. Students who fail to coordinate any such absence with the instructor, or who fail to withdraw from the course in accordance with the COCE official drop and withdrawal policy, will be graded appropriately.

All assignments must be submitted through the appropriate Blackboard tool by 11:59 PM Eastern Standard Time on the specified due date. Refer to the Assignment Guidelines and Rubrics folder for specific details on completing the assignments in this course.

SNHU College of Online and Continuing Education Withdrawal Policy

https://my.snhu.edu/_layouts/FormServer.aspx?XsnLocation=https://my.snhu.edu/FormServerTemplates/COCE.Withdrawal.revised.form.xsn&SaveLocation=https%3A%2F%2Fmy%2Esnhu%2Eedu%2FOffices%2FCOCE%2FAdvising%2FCourse%20Withdrawal%20Library&OpenIn=browser

SNHU College of Online and Continuing Education Guide to Student Success

<https://my.snhu.edu/Resources/StudentHandbooks/Pages/default.aspx>

Blackboard Course Tools/Areas Overview

Your course will be delivered through Blackboard. Below are the most often used Blackboard tools and areas.

| Tool/Area | Description | You Should... |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Announcements | This area is used to post day-to-day course details such as the status of or directions for assignments. | Check the announcements on a regular basis, at least several times each week. |
| Course Information | The course syllabus, assignment guidelines and rubrics, technical support, Student Handbook, and advising information can be found here. | Check this area at the start of the class. It is recommended that the syllabus be downloaded for future reference. |
| Learning Modules | This area contains course content, including lectures, readings, resources, and assignments. | Check this area at the start of each module and throughout the module week to review course materials. |
| Discussion Board | This is one of the areas for discussion and collaboration in the class. | Participate and contribute on a regular basis if your course includes discussions. |
| Research/Writing | SNHU library and research information can be found here. | Check this area for links and information on different library-related resources. |
| My Instructor | Instructor information is located in this area. | Check this area to find out about your instructor's background and contact information. |
| My Grades | Assignment grades are located in this area. | Check this area to find out your grades for your course assignments. |

Southern New Hampshire University Policies

More information about SNHU policies can be found at

<https://my.snhu.edu/Academics/Pages/SyllabiStatements.aspx>.

Continuing Education Center Instructor Availability: All undergraduate Continuing Education instructors at all center locations (Manchester, Nashua, Salem, Portsmouth, and Brunswick, Maine) will be available to students for a minimum of four additional hours of face-to-face meeting time per term. This time is in addition to the required 20 hours of face-to-face time in hybrid classes and the required 40 hours of face-to-face time in lecture classes. How the additional meeting time is utilized is at the discretion of the instructor and may vary by course.

Academic Honesty Policy: Southern New Hampshire University requires all students to adhere to high standards of integrity in their academic work. Activities such as plagiarism and cheating are not condoned by the university. Students involved in such activities are subject to serious disciplinary action. Plagiarism is defined as the use, whether by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another without full and

clear acknowledgment. Cheating includes the giving or receiving of unauthorized assistance on quizzes, examinations, or written assignments from any source not approved by the instructor. Understand that in taking this course, your assignments may be submitted to Turnitin.com or other plagiarism-detection services and reviewed for textual similarity suggestive of plagiarism. All submitted papers are subsequently included as source material in the Turnitin.com database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in other submitted work. Please review the Turnitin.com Usage Policy should you have any questions. For more about academic dishonesty, please refer to the undergraduate or graduate catalogs.

ADA/504 Compliance Statement: Southern New Hampshire University is committed to and concerned with meeting the needs of students challenged by physical, sensory, psychiatric and/or learning disabilities with regard to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, and Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act. At the beginning of each term, or as soon as you become aware of a disability, we encourage you to contact the Office of Disability Services to discuss accommodations for which you may be qualified.

For questions concerning support services, documentation guidelines, or general disability issues:

Office of Disability Services, Exeter Hall, Suite 59

Hyla Jaffe, Director

603.626.9100 ext. 2386

h.jaffe@snhu.edu

For questions concerning disability-related compliance matters, grievance, or legal issues:

Ms. Jet Goldberg, ADA/504 Compliance Officer

Director of Wellness Center

603-645-9679

j.goldberg@snhu.edu

Technical Support: Support for Blackboard or other technology issues via phone, chat, and online form submission is available from the SNHU Technology Help Desk at <http://www.snhu.edu/techsupport> including 1.855.877.9919. Technical support is available 24/7.

Academic Assistance: Online students enrolled in undergraduate courses in the areas of math, writing, accounting, and statistics will have access to Smarthinking online tutoring:
<https://my.snhu.edu/offices/COCE/Tutoring/Pages/default.aspx>.

Library Resources Statement: In addition to the intellectual resources available onsite and online, <https://my.snhu.edu/Academics/Library/Pages/default.aspx>, Shapiro Library makes available group and one-on-one instruction in information literacy, enabling students to define and articulate what knowledge-based resources are relevant to their research interests. Library staff are available to assist students in effectively and efficiently accessing information from credible sources, to compare new knowledge with prior beliefs, and to consider the related ethical, legal, and socioeconomic issues that are inherent in scholarly investigation.

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