



## UNSW Course Outline

# MDIA3008 Issues and Crisis Communication - 2024

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## General Course Information

**Course Code :** MDIA3008

**Year :** 2024

**Term :** Term 2

**Teaching Period :** T2

**Is a multi-term course? :** No

**Faculty :** Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture

**Academic Unit :** School of the Arts and Media

**Delivery Mode :** In Person

**Delivery Format :** Standard

**Delivery Location :** Kensington

**Campus :** Sydney

**Study Level :** Undergraduate

**Units of Credit :** 6

### Useful Links

[Handbook Class Timetable](#)

## Course Details & Outcomes

### Course Description

When crisis strikes an organisation, specialist communicators are crucial to navigating what comes next. This course will give you a clear understanding of what it feels like to be a communicator at the heart of a crisis. With the aid of local and international case studies, an

understanding of widely respected theoretical frameworks and in-class crisis exercises, you will develop the instincts and skills to effectively manage crisis situations. As the world confronts new global challenges, the course offers an appreciation of the range of reputational threats faced by organisations and the strategies to hand to best withstand their impact. You will also build an appreciation of what differentiates crises from issues, and what is entailed when managing the communications across both.

You will gain invaluable insights on how individuals and organisations best prepare, respond, and recover from reputational incidents, and have the opportunity to develop a vital tool in the crisis practitioner's bag, the crisis communications plan.

## Course Learning Outcomes

Course Learning Outcomes
CL01 : Explain the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication.
CL02 : Analyse local and international crisis case studies at a strategic and cultural level.
CL03 : Determine what makes for an effective crisis communication plan.
CL04 : Demonstrate the capacity to defend the actions of organisations during times of crisis.
CL05 : Demonstrate the capacity to interpret the needs and values of different stakeholder groups at times of issues and crisis.

Course Learning Outcomes	Assessment Item
CL01 : Explain the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Essay</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan</li> </ul>
CL02 : Analyse local and international crisis case studies at a strategic and cultural level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan</li> </ul>
CL03 : Determine what makes for an effective crisis communication plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan</li> </ul>
CL04 : Demonstrate the capacity to defend the actions of organisations during times of crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Essay</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan</li> </ul>
CL05 : Demonstrate the capacity to interpret the needs and values of different stakeholder groups at times of issues and crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short Essay</li> <li>• Presentation</li> <li>• Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan</li> </ul>

# Learning and Teaching Technologies

Moodle - Learning Management System | Blackboard Collaborate

## Learning and Teaching in this course

All lectures and tutorials are in-person.

## Assessments

### Assessment Structure

Assessment Item	Weight	Relevant Dates
Short Essay	25%	Start Date: Not Applicable Due Date: 14/06/2024 04:00 PM
Presentation	25%	Start Date: Presentations from week 4 onwards Due Date: Not Applicable
Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan	50%	Due Date: 02/08/2024 04:00 PM

### Assessment Details

#### Short Essay

##### Assessment Overview

This assessment is intended to test your developing understanding of the related functions of issues and crisis communications AND your ability to communicate this clearly and effectively. Feedback will be provided via LMS. 800 to 1,000 words.

##### Course Learning Outcomes

- CL01 : Explain the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication.
- CL04 : Demonstrate the capacity to defend the actions of organisations during times of crisis.
- CL05 : Demonstrate the capacity to interpret the needs and values of different stakeholder groups at times of issues and crisis.

##### Assessment Length

800-1000 words

##### Submission notes

Via Turnitin

### **Assessment information**

You are expected to engage with the readings and lecture materials to date, and provide a clear conceptually rigorous response from an academic perspective. A sound theoretical knowledge will provide the base for you to acquire an effective sense of operational requirements as well as to develop a useable toolkit of practical strategic/tactical competencies as you enter the communications/PR industry.

You will have a choice of question, and are advised to choose your question with care, as they pose different challenges.

You can take the perspective of any organisation, or public who were affected during the pandemic.

Assessment Criteria:

- Proper and fluent written expression
- Development of a conceptually coherent and thoughtful essay
- Productive engagement, with relevant developments, perspectives and conceptual frameworks
- Accurate and properly presented referencing
- Professional visual presentation and formatting

### **Assignment submission Turnitin type**

This assignment is submitted through Turnitin and students do not see Turnitin similarity reports.

## **Presentation**

### **Assessment Overview**

You will be assigned into a small group (of three to four people), and allocated a week to give a Presentation that addresses the week's topic. In your Presentation, your group is required to critically examine a case study relevant to that week's topic. The Presentation is a group assessment, and you are expected to work in collaboration. Your group will present for 10 minutes x number of people in the group (e.g., 3 group members, 30 minutes). Feedback will be provided in class, and also via LMS.

### **Course Learning Outcomes**

- CL01 : Explain the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication.
- CL02 : Analyse local and international crisis case studies at a strategic and cultural level.
- CL04 : Demonstrate the capacity to defend the actions of organisations during times of

crisis.

- CLO5 : Demonstrate the capacity to interpret the needs and values of different stakeholder groups at times of issues and crisis.

### Assessment Length

10 minutes per person, so 40 minute presentation for 4 people.

### Assessment information

The presentation will take the form of a press conference . In your press conference, your group is required to offer an impassioned defence of a case study of your choice. The group will defend the actions taken by a particular organisation, or individual. If the group feels there were weaknesses in the response, they can produce a set of recommendations.

The press conference is a group assessment, and you are expected to work in collaboration. The exercise will be made up of two parts; in the first, you present your findings – made up of the positives and any possible recommendations; while the second will be the questions you will be taking from your audience. Audience members will play the role of journalists, and so are expected to take a participatory role. Your tutor will hold your group strictly to this time limit.

Your tutor will hold your group strictly to the time limit.

You are advised to follow this general format with your presentation:

1. Introduction: What are you talking about? Why is this topic relevant (why should people care?)  
How are you approaching the topic (what is your approach and methodology)?
2. Overview: What are the key contexts? What are the most important developments? Which are the key aspects of the issue/crisis?
3. Analysis/Recommendations: What are the key mistakes and/or key successes with regards to the communications strategy? How can you substantiate your analysis? What would you recommend? What are your insights? How can you support your findings with relevant research and/or theoretical frameworks?
4. Conclusion: What are the key points/arguments you want to leave with your audience?

Working in a small group will be a common activity for working in the communications/PR industry. A key premise behind the assessment is for you to treat the complexities and uncertainties of group dynamics and interactions as a fundamental aspect of the learning process - as a valuable opportunity for practicing and mastering an activity that you will need to

be proficient with.

#### Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to work professionally as a team to take charge and to lead a presentation without notes.
- Ability to select and develop an appropriate case study, with scope for analysis.
- Ability to coherently and persuasively communicate key ideas and points.
- Ability to provide an effective and succinct overview, showing strong understanding of the relevant industry contexts and the case study's inherent issues.
- Ability to provide meaningful insights, analysis and/or recommendations properly supported by relevant concepts, data and theory.
- Ability to respond clearly and effectively when questioned by audience members.

#### Assignment submission Turnitin type

This is not a Turnitin assignment

## Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan

#### Assessment Overview

There are two choices available in terms of this major project. You can submit an individual Critical Analysis (2,000 to 2,500 words), OR submit a Crisis Communication Plan as a collaborative pair (3,500-4,000 words; students will be given an individual grade). This is the final assessment task. Feedback will be provided via LMS.

#### Course Learning Outcomes

- CL01 : Explain the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication.
- CL02 : Analyse local and international crisis case studies at a strategic and cultural level.
- CL03 : Determine what makes for an effective crisis communication plan.
- CL04 : Demonstrate the capacity to defend the actions of organisations during times of crisis.
- CL05 : Demonstrate the capacity to interpret the needs and values of different stakeholder groups at times of issues and crisis.

#### Assessment Length

Critical Analysis (2000-2500), OR Crisis Communications Plan (3500-4000)

#### Submission notes

There are separate Turnitin submission boxes for the Critical Analysis/Crisis Comms Plan

#### Assessment information

This major assessment will be worth a substantial percentage of your final mark. It has been deliberately designed this way, as working in the communications/PR industry will be dependent

on the success of major projects you are involved with. Some time will be set aside in classes in order to workshop the assessment.

For the critical analysis, your task will be to analyse ONE case study. A selection of four possible case studies will be posted on Moodle approximately two weeks before the assessment deadline. This is intended to provide some semblance of the time pressures, spontaneity and lack of foresight that characterise crises and issues. These case studies will be drawn from actual events and will have occurred within the past two years.

A suggested format is as follows:

- Introduction: What's the case study and why is it relevant for issues/crisis communicators? How are you approaching the topic? What is your methodology? Do you have one, or two effective research questions, or hypotheses to apply? Is there a specific theoretical foundation such as IRT, SCCT that you will use?
- Overview: What are the key contexts? What are the most important developments? Which are the key aspects of the issue/crisis and why?
- Analysis/Recommendations: What are the key mistakes and/or key successes with regards to the communications strategy? What would you recommend? What are your insights? How can you support your points, with relevant facts, data and/or theoretical frameworks?
- Conclusion: What are the key takeaways?

For the Critical Analysis, you will be required to adhere to proper academic conventions. You are expected to draw on relevant readings and course materials. Use of external readings and sources as supplementary material will be of benefit.

#### Assessment Criteria (Critical Analysis)

- Ability to develop a clearly argued, well-researched and conceptually solid perspective on your case study
- Ability to show strong understanding of relevant principles and theoretical frameworks behind issues/crisis communications
- Ability to provide meaningful and properly supported analysis and/or recommendations
- Fluent and coherent written expression
- Accurate and properly presented referencing
- Professional visual presentation and formatting

In terms of the second option, you are required to create a comprehensive, effective, and clearly navigable Crisis Communication Plan for a company or organisation. (You are advised to choose a small-to-medium enterprise.) Please refer to the assessment criteria below.

For a Crisis Communications Plan, you will be working as a collaborative pair, with a partner of

your choice. Both parties will receive the same mark/grade, so please choose your partner carefully. (You do NOT have the option of working on this task individually, as Crisis Communication Plans are typically produced by small teams of people working together in a collaborative fashion; hence why you are required to work with a partner for this task.)

This company/organisation needs to be an actual corporate entity, which will need to sign off on the project by way of a signed letter from a company representative holding a senior management position, confirming that: (1.) They are giving you permission to create a Crisis Comms Plan for the company/organisation; (2.) The company/organisation does not have a pre-existing Crisis Comms Plan.

For the Crisis Communication Plan, you will be required to adhere to accepted industry practice conventions. While you are expected to make productive use of relevant readings and lecture materials, and to use external readings and sources as supplementary material if you wish – these do not need to be explicitly cited in the Plan, as it is intended to be a professional business report, not an academic piece of writing. You will be learning about the various elements of a Crisis Communication plan throughout the course, and key aspects will be discussed during the lectures. Some useful resources will also be available on Moodle.

\* Each pair should submit ONE Crisis Communication Plan to Turnitin. The other student should simply submit ONLY a cover page, with basic information such as your name, student number, and the details of your partner.

**Assessment Criteria (Crisis Communication Plan):**

- Relevant selection and overview of the organisation in need of a Crisis Communication Plan.
- Appropriate coverage of and engagement with organisational history, reputation, goals, and industry context.
- Effective identification and analysis of the organisation's key risks and issues.
- Ability to effectively put together and present the necessary components of a comprehensive Crisis Plan relevant to your selected organisation.
- Fluent and coherent written expression.
- Professional visual presentation, in accordance with the conventions of a business report format.

#### **Assignment submission Turnitin type**

This assignment is submitted through Turnitin and students do not see Turnitin similarity reports.



# General Assessment Information

This ECOS document is intended primarily as a policy document - please refer to the Comprehensive Course Guide section on the Moodle site for complete information on the course.

## Grading Basis

Standard

## Requirements to pass course

Students must attempt all assessments to pass the course.

# Course Schedule

Teaching Week/Module	Activity Type	Content
Week 1 : 27 May - 2 June	Lecture	Introduction to issues and crisis communications
	Tutorial	Introduction to issues and crisis communications
Week 2 : 3 June - 9 June	Lecture	Communicating in crisis to stakeholders
	Tutorial	Communicating in crisis to stakeholders
Week 3 : 10 June - 16 June	Lecture	Utilising frames and key messages
	Tutorial	Utilising frames and key messages
	Assessment	Assessment 1 due Friday, June 14 at 4.00pm
Week 4 : 17 June - 23 June	Lecture	Employees and organisational crisis communications
	Tutorial	Employees and organisational crisis communications
	Assessment	Assessment 2 - group presentations - start from week 4.
Week 5 : 24 June - 30 June	Lecture	Crisis communication planning
	Tutorial	Crisis communication planning
Week 6 : 1 July - 7 July	Reading	READING WEEK. Please ensure that you catch up with readings.
Week 7 : 8 July - 14 July	Lecture	Theoretical frameworks: IRT & SCCT
	Tutorial	Theoretical frameworks: IRT & SCCT
Week 8 : 15 July - 21 July	Lecture	Health crisis communications
	Tutorial	Health crisis communications
Week 9 : 22 July - 28 July	Lecture	Crisis, the internet and social media
	Tutorial	Crisis, the internet and social media
Week 10 : 29 July - 4 August	Lecture	Leadership and the nature of transboundary crises
	Tutorial	Leadership and the nature of transboundary crises
	Assessment	Assessment 3 due Friday, August 2 at 4.00pm

# Attendance Requirements

## SAM attendance guidelines.

Students are expected to be regular and punctual in attendance at all classes for the School of the Arts & Media (SAM) courses in which they are enrolled. We expect **80% minimum attendance in tutorials**. If students have more than two unexplained absences they may be refused final

assessment.

Students who do not meet attendance expectations run the risk of failing a course. No additional or special consideration will be provided if a student misses out on essential course information and materials, or misses an assessment task/deadline, due to unexplained absences or an unapproved lack of attendance.

A student may be advised by the Course Convenor to withdraw from the course if significant learning activities are missed. Alternatively, a student may be required to undertake supplementary class(es) or task(s) as prescribed by the Course Convenor.

If assessment tasks have been missed, the student should apply for [Special Consideration](#), accompanied by appropriate documentation.

## Course Resources

### Prescribed Resources

- Website - Resources will be available on the Course Moodle website.

### Recommended Resources

#### Further Reading

Alpaslan C et al, 2009, 'Corporate Governance in the Context of Crises: Towards a Stakeholder Theory of Crisis Management', , 17, (1) pp38 - 49.

Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S.J. (Eds.), 2001, The Handbook of Crisis Communication, edited by Malden, MA: Blackwell

Galloway, C. & Kwanash-Aidoo, K., 2009, Public Relations Issues and Crisis Management, Melbourne: Thomson Social Science Press

Gilpin, D.R. & Murphy, P.J., 2008, Crisis Management in a Complex World, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Griffin, A., 2009, New Strategies for Reputation Management: Gaining Control of Issues, Crises and Corporate Social Responsibility, London: Kogan Page

Heath, R. & Palenchar, M.J., 2008, Strategic Issues Management: Organisations and Public Policy Challenges, 2nd edition, California, Thousand Oaks: Sage

Heath, R.L. & O'Hair, H.D. (Eds.), 2009, Handbook of Risk and Crisis Communication, New York: Routledge

Howard, C., 1984, Issues Management: Origins of the future, Stamford, CT: Issue Action Publishers

Jaques, T., 2014, Issue and Crisis Management: Exploring Issues, Crises, Risk and Reputation, South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press

Regeester, M. & Larkin, J., 2008, Risk Issues and Crisis Management in Public Relations: A Casebook of Best Practice, 4th edition, London: CIPR

Toth, E.L. (Ed.), 2007, The Future of Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Challenges for the Next Generation, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Young, K, 2018, 'Enhancing employee communication behaviors for sensemaking and sensegiving in crisis situations', Journal of Communication Management, 22, (4) pp451 - 475.

#### Recommended Publications

Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal

Journal of Business Communication

Journal of Business Ethics

Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management

Journal of Communication Management

Journal of Public Relations Research

Public Relations Review

\* This is a list of supplementary reading resources, which may be helpful in doing further research. You are, of course, encouraged to move beyond these suggested texts.

## Course Evaluation and Development

Your feedback gathered from the surveys at the end of the session offers valuable input. Your experiences and suggestions are important, and there is always room for improvement in terms

of content and teaching strategies.

## Staff Details

Position	Name	Email	Location	Phone	Availability	Equitable Learning Services Contact	Primary Contact
Convenor	Silke Kerwick				By appointment	Yes	Yes

## Other Useful Information

### Academic Information

Due to evolving advice by NSW Health, students must check for updated information regarding online learning for all Arts, Design and Architecture courses this term (via Moodle or course information provided).

Please see: <https://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/student-life/resources-support/protocols-guidelines> for essential student information relating to:

- UNSW and Faculty policies and procedures;
- Student Support Services;
- Dean's List;
- review of results;
- credit transfer;
- cross-institutional study and exchange;
- examination information;
- enrolment information;
- Special Consideration in the event of illness or misadventure;
- student equity and disability;

And other essential academic information.

### Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement.

UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

- Copying: Using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This includes copying materials, ideas or concepts from a book, article, report or other written document, presentation, composition, artwork, design, drawing, circuitry, computer program or software, website, internet, other electronic resource, or another person's assignment without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Inappropriate paraphrasing: Changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original information, structure and/or progression of ideas of the original without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit and to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without appropriate referencing.
- Collusion: Working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student for the purpose of them plagiarising, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.
- Inappropriate citation: Citing sources which have not been read, without acknowledging the "secondary" source from which knowledge of them has been obtained.
- Duplication ("self-plagiarism"): Submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

The UNSW Academic Skills support offers resources and individual consultations. Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study. One of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items. UNSW Library has the ELISE tool available to assist you with your study at UNSW. ELISE is designed to introduce new students to studying at UNSW, but it can also be a great refresher during your study.

Completing the ELISE tutorial and quiz will enable you to:

- analyse topics, plan responses and organise research for academic writing and other assessment tasks
- effectively and efficiently find appropriate information sources and evaluate relevance to your needs
- use and manage information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose
- better manage your time
- understand your rights and responsibilities as a student at UNSW
- be aware of plagiarism, copyright, UNSW Student Code of Conduct and Acceptable Use of UNSW ICT Resources Policy
- be aware of the standards of behaviour expected of everyone in the UNSW community
- locate services and information about UNSW and UNSW Library

## Use of AI for assessments

As AI applications continue to develop, and technology rapidly progresses around us, we remain committed to our values around academic integrity at UNSW. Where the use of AI tools, such as ChatGPT, has been permitted by your course convener, they must be properly credited and your submissions must be substantially your own work.

In cases where the use of AI has been prohibited, please respect this and be aware that where unauthorised use is detected, penalties will apply.

[Use of AI for assessments | UNSW Current Students](#)

## Submission of Assessment Tasks

### Turnitin Submission

If you encounter a problem when attempting to submit your assignment through Turnitin, please telephone External Support on 9385 3331 or email them on [externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au](mailto:externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au)

Support hours are 8:00am – 10:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am – 5:00pm on weekends (365 days a year). If you are unable to submit your assignment due to a fault with Turnitin, you may apply for an extension, but you must retain your ticket number from External Support (along with any other relevant documents) to include as evidence to support your extension application. If you email External Support, you will automatically receive a ticket number, but if you telephone, you will need to specifically ask for one. Turnitin also provides updates on their system status on Twitter.

Generally, assessment tasks must be submitted electronically via either Turnitin or a Moodle assignment. In instances where this is not possible, alternative submission details will be stated on your course's Moodle site. For information on how to submit assignments online via Moodle: <https://student.unsw.edu.au/how-submit-assignment-moodle>

### Late Submission Penalty

UNSW has a standard late submission penalty of:

- 5% per calendar day,
- for all assessments where a penalty applies,
- capped at five calendar days (120 hours) from the assessment deadline, after which a student cannot submit an assessment, and

- no permitted variation.

Students are expected to manage their time to meet deadlines and to request [Special Consideration](#) as early as possible before the deadline. Support with [Time Management is available here](#).

## School Contact Information

### School of the Arts and Media

**Location:** Room 312, Level 3 Robert Webster Building

**Opening Hours:** Monday -Friday, 9am - 5 pm

**Email:** sam@unsw.edu.au

**Phone:** +612 9385 4856

**web:** <https://www.unsw.edu.au/arts-design-architecture/our-schools/arts-media>