



Syllabus

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT

COM 461: Communicating Crisis, Emergency and Social Change

5 Credits

Effective: Spring 2020/2021

Access to the Internet is required.

All written assignments must be in Microsoft-Word-compatible formats.

See the library's APA Style Guide tutorial for a list of resources that can help you use APA style.

FACULTY

Faculty Name: FACULTY NAME

Contact Information: CONTACT INFORMATION

[INSTRUCTOR MAY INSERT PERSONAL MESSAGE IF DESIRED]

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course investigates the development and implications of crisis communications in today's world. Students will develop a framework for a communication plan in the event of a crisis or emergency, as well as learn how to manage issues that might develop into a crisis or negative story or event, examine issues of risk management and crisis recognition, and understand how to factor the social and psychological implications of a crisis or emergency into a communications plan. Through case studies and theory, this course helps students develop the critical thinking skills, analysis, and ethical grounding required to handle the communication of crises and emergencies.

COURSE RESOURCES

Required and recommended resources to complete coursework and assignments are found on the course [Reading List](#). The reading list can be found under *Course Information* in Blackboard as well as from the library homepage ("Find Your Textbook" button).

Note: Required resources that must be purchased by the student are tagged "Purchase from a vendor of your choosing." Required resources with a direct link, "Available through CityU Library", are available electronically at no cost to students.

Students in Canada may purchase course resources from the [Canada Bookstore](#), and students outside the U.S. and Canada should contact their advisor or textbook coordinator for additional information.

CITYU LEARNING GOALS

This course supports the following City University learning goals:

- Professional competency and professional identity

COURSE OUTCOMES

In this course, learners:

- Define, recognize and manage a crisis through communications
- Design a strategic crisis communications plan
- Examine risk assessment and reputation management

CORE CONCEPTS, KNOWLEDGE, AND SKILLS

- Crisis management
- Issues management
- Reputation management
- Risk assessment

OVERVIEW OF COURSE GRADING

The grades earned for the course will be derived using City University of Seattle's decimal grading system, based on the following:

Overview of Required Assignments	% of Final Grade
<i>Weekly Participation (Discussion Board & Activities)</i>	40%
<i>Media Relations Plan</i>	10%
<i>Media Strategy Response</i>	20%
<i>Final Project: Case Study</i>	30%
TOTAL	100%

SPECIFICS OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The instructor will provide grading rubrics that will provide more detail as to how this assignment will be graded. Grading rubrics are available on BlackBoard for Assignments, and Discussion Board & Activities.

Course activities and participation

Students will be evaluated on their participation in classroom discussions; their ability to present, explain, or defend alternative viewpoints- verbally or in writing; and the degree to which they have mastered the concepts and principles in the course. Written work will be assessed not only on relevance to the subject presented, but also on adherence to good written form and professional presentation. Course activities in a totally online course will be different from other formats. In an online class participation through discussion board (DB) activities are integral to the success of the course.

The DBs activities and their particular instructions will be provided in the course itself; however, they are an excellent place for students to debate and critically analyze ideas. These activities provide a superior forum for students to bring their own backgrounds and insights in to the learning environment. In a traditional or hybrid class setting course activities may include, to a lesser degree than an online course, DBs; however, the professor will determine which specific course activities will be more relevant and the instructions and details will be provided through Blackboard.

Media Relations Plan

Choose **ONE** from the following three options (an Organization and Crisis):

- (a) The Boeing Company – Battery fires onboard 787
- (b) Amazon.com, Inc. – Employee work conditions & company culture
- (c) Los Angeles Clippers – Racial comments by Owner Donald Sterling

Plan to address how this organization could proactively and reactively respond, plan for, or address the crisis. This assignment will address the “WHAT” of crisis communications/planning; In your Media Strategy Response you will address “HOW”.

- a. What steps can you take proactively to prevent these types of incidents from becoming major/negative media stories?
- b. During a media-related crisis, how will you respond?
- c. Who are the external stakeholders and how will you influence them?
- d. What are the internal stakeholders and how will you influence them?
- e. Why do you believe your plan will work?
- f. What weaknesses exist in your plan?

With respect to word count, write clearly, fully, and powerfully to best complete the assignment).

Media Strategy Response

The assigned reading “*The Crisis Communications Playbook...*” provides leaders directions when responding to crisis. Below I’ve identified five points of emphasis from the reading. These are likely ingredients for a thorough response strategy. Choose **three** points (below) from the reading to compare and contrast how these points play themselves out in the case studies from week 6 (Sony & Commonwealth).

Using the concepts outlined by the author of the article (below), how would the author assess Sony and Commonwealth in their various crises? Apply these ideas to your assessment.

- Admit your mistakes publicly
- Communicate early and often
- Tell your side of the story most efficiently and most eloquently through the media
- You need to explain why things will be different in the future
- You need to keep the business running

Using examples from the media (such as a press release, interview, or other communication via the media from Sony or Commonwealth). Provide specific examples and references to support your assessment. For instance, if you evaluate a press release, cite it and discuss the strengths and weaknesses. What was done well, what could be improved, what was out of their control? How would any of our learned course concepts be applied for a positive outcome? Word count for this assignment should be 900-1200 words.

Final Case Study Project

Imagine you are an analyst working for a media consulting company. You've received word that the company CEO is attending a roundtable meeting where she and other executives will discuss cases and how the companies responded to media and crisis in these cases. She's asked you to choose one of the cases below and to complete a crisis communication analysis.

Your brief should be 1200-1800 words, not including footnotes and appendices (i.e. bibliography). Choose from **ONE** of the following case studies:

- a) Affordable Care Act Website Rollout
- OR-
- b) Lac-Mégantic Rail Disaster

Once you choose a case, download the Case Study from BlackBoard. For your brief, you are to find at least three additional pieces of media coverage examples (local, national, or international are all fine) pertaining to case (can be newspaper, video, or other publication). Read/watch them, as well as other supporting material you find useful to educate yourself on the nature of the case, the media coverage, and with particular attention to the criticisms, and incorporate each of the following components:

- Introduction: describe to the reader the nature of the situation. What were the primary media concerns/focus, why, and, in two or three sentences, what was the perspective/summary reporting? Also briefly discuss the tone of the media reports you have read. In other words, how does the media construct this?
- What media communications, public relations, brand integrity, and risk to reputation implications does this incident present to the entity involved?
- Incorporate specific concepts and strategies you have learned throughout the course, discuss the specifics of your strategy to manage the media fallout, public response, interagency response, and your recommendations to your company to implement media response plan changes in the future.
- In your conclusion, review the implications of the media reports to your agency and summarize the major elements of the strategy you devised in response to the report.

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments

A critical aspect of project management is to meet predefined deadlines. Therefore, all assignments are expected to be submitted when due. No late assignments are accepted. Life-situations do occur. When an issue arises coordinate with the instructor prior to the assignment's due date and the due date may be adjusted. It is in the best interest of the student to ensure that all assignments are submitted on time.

Participation

Class participation will be evaluated during class. Participation includes being prepared for class discussions and contributing meaningful content when appropriate. It also includes individual effort contributed to the team project.

Professional Writing

Assignments require error-free writing that uses standard English conventions and logical flow of organization to address topics clearly, completely, and concisely. CityU requires the use of APA style.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Students are responsible for understanding and adhering to all of City University of Seattle's academic policies. The most current versions of these policies can be found in the University Catalog that is linked from the CityU Web site.

Antidiscrimination

City University of Seattle and its staff and faculty are committed to supporting our students. We value equity, diversity, and inclusion as a way of life as well as the educational opportunities it provides. City U will not tolerate any form of discrimination based on race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identification, socioeconomic status, or religious values. If you have experienced any discrimination based on any of the above, we encourage you to report this to the University. Please report this to your instructor. If you do not feel safe reporting this to your instructor, please report to the Provost or to the Vice President of Student Affairs.

Non-Discrimination & Prohibition of Sexual Harassment

City University of Seattle adheres to all federal, state, and local civil rights laws prohibiting discrimination in employment and education. The University is committed to ensuring that the education environment is bounded by standards of mutual respect and safety and is free from discriminatory practices.

In the U.S., the University is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to ensure that all of its education programs and activities do not discriminate on the basis of sex/gender. Sex include sex, sex stereotypes, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and pregnancy or parenting status. Sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, and stalking are forms of sex discrimination, which are prohibited under Title IX and by City University of Seattle policy. City University of Seattle also prohibits retaliation against any person opposing discrimination or participating in any discrimination investigation or complaint process internal or external to the institution. Questions regarding Title IX, including its application and/or concerns about noncompliance, should be directed to the Title IX Coordinator. For a complete copy of the policy or for more information, visit <https://my.cityu.edu/titleix> or contact the Title IX Coordinator.

In Canada, in compliance with the British Columbia Human Rights Code, the Alberta Human Rights Act, WorksafeBC, and the Workers' Compensation Board of Alberta, the University believes that its environment should at all times be supportive and respectful of the dignity and self-esteem of individuals.

Discrimination, harassment and bullying conduct, whether through person to person behaviour or via electronic communications such as email or social media is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. As an educational institution, it is our responsibility to cultivate an environment of excellence, equity, mutual respect and to recognize the value and potential of every individual. The University will take all necessary steps to meet or exceed the requirements of the law to prevent discrimination, harassment and bullying. The Respectful Workplace Policy for the prevention of discrimination, harassment and bullying policy and procedure can be found at <https://www.cityu.edu/discover-cityu/about-cityu/> under the Policies section or at <https://www.cityuniversity.ca/about/>.

Religious Accommodations

City University of Seattle has a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The University's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available in the University Catalog and on the my.cityu.edu student portal. Accommodations must be requested by the 20% mark of this course (e.g. day 14 of a ten-week course, day 7 of a 5-week course) using the Religious Accommodations Request Form found on the student dashboard in the my.cityu.edu student portal.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity in students requires the pursuit of scholarly activity that is free from fraud, deception and unauthorized collaboration with other individuals. Students are responsible for understanding CityU's policy on academic integrity and adhering to its standards in meeting all course requirements. A complete copy of this policy can be found in the University Catalog under *Student Rights and Responsibilities* on the page titled *Academic Integrity Policy*.

Attendance

Students taking courses in any format at the University are expected to be diligent in their studies and to attend class regularly.

Regular class attendance is important in achieving learning outcomes in the course and may be a valid consideration in determining the final grade. For classes where a physical presence is required, a student has attended if they are present at any time during the class session. For online classes, a student has attended if they have posted or submitted an assignment. A complete copy of this policy can be in the University Catalog under *Student Rights and Responsibilities* on the page titled *Attendance*.

Final Assignment Due Date

Final assignments for each class at CityU must be due on or before the final date of the course as indicated in the university's course information system. Due dates that extend beyond the final date of the course may negatively impact tuition funding for students.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Disability Services Accommodations Statement

Students with a documented disability who wish to request academic accommodations are encouraged to contact Disability Support Services to discuss accommodation requests and eligibility requirements. Please contact Disability Support Services at disability@cityu.edu or 206.239.4752 or visit the Disability Support Services page in the my.cityu.edu portal. Confidentiality will be observed in all inquiries. Once approved, information about academic accommodations will be shared with course instructors.

Library Services

CityU librarians are available to help students find the resources and information they need to succeed in this course. Contact a CityU librarian through the Ask a Librarian service, or access library resources and services online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Smarthinking Tutoring

CityU students have access to free online tutoring offered through Smarthinking, including writing support, from certified tutors 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Contact CityU's Student Support Center at help@cityu.ed to request a user name and password.