

## Class Syllabus

**JOUR 840 Crisis Communications  
Homeland Security Graduate Program  
University of Kansas  
Fall, 2017**

**Thursdays beginning Aug. 24, 2017, 5:00 – 9:20 p.m.**

Instructor: Matt Tidwell, Ph.D., APR  
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Office Hours: 3:30-4:30 on class days at Fairfield Inn (please make an appointment)

**Course Description:** An organization's reputation is perhaps its most valuable asset, yet reputations are most vulnerable in times of crisis. In this class, effective crisis communications will be studied as a means to preserve and defend reputation and maintain business continuity. Students will look at all aspects of crisis communications including typology of crises; history of crisis communications; theoretical basis for effective crisis response and communications; and crisis communications planning methodologies and strategies.

### **Overview of this course**

While not all of us are communications experts, the likelihood that all of us will be involved in some aspect of crisis management and crisis communications is high (and gets progressively higher as we take management roles within our organizations). This course will utilize a combination of reading, group discussion, facilitated group work, guest speakers and case studies to help us understand the importance of crisis communications and how it is best implemented within organizations.

### **Textbooks**

*Crisis Communications: A Casebook Approach*, Fearn-Banks, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition ISBN: 9781138923744

*Reputation Rules*, Diermeier, ISBN: 9780071763745

Other readings to be provided by the instructor.

### **Course goals**

- Understand the different types of crises and their scope of impact internally and externally
- Understand and apply theories of crisis communication response as well as threat analysis/evaluation
- Understand stakeholders affected in a crisis and their impact on reputation as well as how to manage media (traditional media and social media) during a crisis
- Understand and apply crisis communications planning tools and be able to draft and implement a crisis communications plan
- Practice crisis communications skills using real-time simulation.

### **My role**

- To provide resources and common areas of study for all students, and a structure that promotes learning
- To provide feedback on ideas, assignments and projects
- To help troubleshoot problems and point students to appropriate resources
- To help students learn.

### **Your role**

- To keep the identified learning goals for the course top-of-mind and to pursue those goals throughout the course
- To engage in class projects to help you meet your goals
- To participate thoughtfully and actively in class discussions and group work
- To complete all the required work for the class
- To keep an open mind and (very importantly) to share your ideas and thoughts to help everyone in the class learn.

### **Structure of the course**

This class will be heavy on reading, discussion and project work (some in teams, some individually). Projects and grading are broken down in the table at bottom. You will be graded on the quality of your work, including the writing, the depth of your ideas and your willingness to experiment and explore.

You will notice that 15% of the class grade is class participation. I do this intentionally as, in graduate school, we are all contributing actively to the body of knowledge.

All of your work and comments should show solid thinking and have a clear focus. Your writing should be free of errors in grammar, usage, spelling and punctuation. Your work should be about ideas, but that doesn't mean you need to write in dense, jargon-filled language. Write authoritatively, but write so that the rest of us can learn what you have learned.

You'll find the breakdown for determining the final grade below, and I'll describe the assignments and cover the day-by-day class plan in our first class session. Each assignment will be introduced in class and instructions will be posted on Blackboard (Bb). In some cases, I will ask you to complete an assignment (like a quiz) within Blackboard or to post your written documents to Blackboard.

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Points (1000 points total for the class)</b>
Quiz 1	50
Individual paper 1	50
Individual paper 2	75
Quiz 2	50
Group exercise on 4-phase plan	100
Individual paper 3	75
Quiz 3	50
"Ah-ha moment" paper	100
Final project group preparation	100
Final project group execution	200
Class participation	150

### **How we'll communicate**

It is extremely important that we establish good communications practices in the course. If you have a question, by all means, contact me immediately rather than waiting (the course moves too quickly to wait). My preference is my office phone, but call my cell phone if your question is urgent or if you need to inform me of something. On most class days, I will also keep "office hours" from 3:30-4:30 at Fairfield Inn if you'd like to meet with me in person (please let me know so I can expect you).

### **Attendance policy**

The reality is that, in an eight-week course, if you miss even one class you have missed a lot. But, I understand that sometimes circumstances beyond our control come into play and it may be necessary for you to miss a class. The important thing is to let me know right away so that I can help you catch up. I am investigating a way to record portions/all of our classes and will keep you informed if that can be arranged.

### **Class location**

All classes will be at Fairfield Inn with one exception: we will be holding one class session at the Johnson County Emergency Operations Center. Details to come.

## **Class schedule**

The class schedule (a separate document from this syllabus which we will cover in the first class) will serve as our blueprint for all class sessions, assignments, etc. This will be posted on Bb and updated as needed to accommodate minor changes.

## **Blackboard**

We'll review how to use the Bb site in the first class. It is very important to check the Announcements section on a daily basis throughout the term of the class.

## **The fine print**

Academic Misconduct: We will strictly follow the code of Academic Misconduct detailed in the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). University policies covering academic misconduct are spelled out in the current Student Handbook.

## **Policy on Plagiarism and Fabrication/Falsification**

*Adopted May 7, 2004:*

The William Allen White School of Journalism and Mass Communications does not tolerate plagiarism, fabrication of evidence and falsification of evidence.

Penalties for plagiarism, fabrication or falsification can include a failing grade for this course and expulsion from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, please consult the professor(s) of this course.

*The following definitions are from Article II, Section 6, of the University Senate Rules and Regulations, revised FY98.*

## **Firearms policy (effective July 1, 2017)**

Individuals who choose to carry concealed handguns **are solely responsible to do so in a safe and secure manner in strict conformity with [state and federal laws](#) and [KU weapons policy](#)**. Safety measures outlined in the KU weapons policy specify that a concealed handgun:

- Must be under the constant control of the carrier.
- Must be out of view, concealed either on the body of the carrier, or backpack, purse, or bag that remains under the carrier's custody and control.
- Must be in a holster that covers the trigger area and secures any external hammer in an un-cocked position
- Must have the safety on, and have no round in the chamber.

## **Academic accommodations**

The Academic Achievement and Access Center (AAAC) coordinates academic accommodations and services for all eligible KU students with disabilities. If you

have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations and have not contacted the AAAC, please do so as soon as possible. More information about AAAC can be obtained at the KU Edwards Student Services Welcome Center, Regents Center 119 at 913-897-8539 or [kuecsuccess@ku.edu](mailto:kuecsuccess@ku.edu). Additional information about AAAC services can be found at [access.ku.edu](http://access.ku.edu). Please contact me privately in regard to your needs in this course.

**Writing Center**

The Writing Center is offering online consultations during the fall semester. Students can schedule an online appointment at [writing.ku.edu](http://writing.ku.edu).

**Copying or recording:** Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor, are the property of the instructor and cannot be republished without his permission.