

**Communication 3332  
Risk Communication  
The Ohio State University  
Spring 2016**

**Course Instructor:** Jason C. Coronel, Ph.D.

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**Office phone:** 614-242-9062

**Office hours:** Tuesday and Thursday, 5:20 to 6:20 pm and by appointment

**Office Location:** Journalism 207

**Course location:** Journalism Building 216

**Course time:** Tuesday and Thursday, 3:55-5:15 pm

**Course Description**

Can we design messages that can “scare” people into living a healthier lifestyle? Why do many people have a difficult time understanding probabilities? How do we design messages that can effectively convey environmental, health, and safety risks? This course attempts to answer these and many other questions by providing a broad overview of the psychological and communication issues involved in risk perception. At the end of this course, students should be able to use this knowledge in order to design messages that can effectively convey risk information.

**Course Objectives**

(1) To become familiar with the psychological processes involved in risk perception and assessment (2) To help students understand various ways of developing effective risk communication strategies (3) To provide students the knowledge required to evaluate risk communication efforts

**Required Materials**

All required readings will be posted on Carmen.

**Course Format**

The course is composed of lecture sessions. *During lecture, I will discuss a large amount of information that go beyond the assigned readings (such information will also appear in the exams).* Thus, it is important that you attend each session and take good notes.

## Course Requirements

(1) *Exam 1 (50 pts.) and Exam 2 (50 pts.)*. Exams will assess your knowledge of all aspects of the course (i.e., course readings, lectures). Exam 2 will test your knowledge of material covered throughout the entire course.

**READ CAREFULLY:** Make-up tests will only be given when the student provides an appropriate justification for missing the scheduled test date. Make-up exams will be arranged for university-excused or unavoidable circumstances only (e.g., deaths, personal/family illness and emergencies) with written verification. Appropriate justification depends on each case and will be decided by Dr. Coronel. The instructor also reserves the right to withhold the exam if a student arrives more than 15 minutes late on exam days (i.e., he/she will receive a zero on the exam). If the student arrives after the first person has completed/left the exam, the student will not be allowed to take that exam and will receive an automatic zero.

(2) *Attendance/participation (50 pts.)*. A participation grade will be assigned based on your attendance and active participation in class activities and discussions. The instructor will randomly take attendance at various points during the semester. Students will be allowed TWO absences for personal matters during the semester. For each unexcused absence after that, you will lose 5 points for every session you miss.

## Policies and Procedures

Students are expected to act responsibly and abide by the following policies:

**Laptops, cell-phones, and recording devices.** All cell phones must be silenced during class. Students must refrain from reading the newspaper, texting, listening to headphones, e-mailing, or using the Internet during class unless it is part of the lecture. Students may be asked to leave class for such behaviors.

Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed in class. **However,** they must only be used for taking down notes. If a student is using an electronic device for something other than class-related activities and it is distracting to me, I will kick the student out of class.

Any form of audio or video recording is **not** allowed in class. Students are also not permitted to take pictures of the projection screen. The instructor does **not** give permission for the lecture sessions to be recorded (in either an audio or video format).

**Slides on Carmen.** PowerPoint slides will be posted on Carmen. However, you need contextual information provided during lecture in order to understand the content on the slides. Students, therefore, need to take good notes during lectures.

**Academic misconduct.** Academic misconduct will not be tolerated on any occasion. It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>

## Disability Services

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>

**Graduating Seniors and Other Students.** Graduating seniors (and other students) who “need” this course to graduate should work especially hard to ensure that they will pass this course. To be fair to all students in the class, there will *not* be opportunities for students to re-take exams or re-complete assignments in order to raise their grades. *It is the student’s responsibility* to ensure that he or she receives a passing final grade by working diligently and responsibly throughout the semester. *Exceptions will not be made.*

**Grading Scheme.** At the end of the course, dividing your total number of points by 150 will yield your final course grade percentage. Letter grades will be assigned using the following grading scheme. There will be rounding on the “.5” threshold (e.g., 85.5 = 86, 85.4 = 85).

93 - 100 (A)  
90 - 92 (A-)  
87 - 89 (B+)  
83 - 86 (B)  
80 - 82 (B-)  
77 - 79 (C+)  
73 - 76 (C)  
70 - 72 (C-)  
67 - 69 (D+)  
60 - 66 (D)  
Below 60 (E)

**Tentative nature of this syllabus.** This syllabus is an agreement between the instructor and the student. Events that transpire over the semester may require me to modify the syllabus. In the event I need to modify the syllabus, I will announce the modification in class. However, it is your responsibility to keep up with any such modifications and be aware of current policies, deadlines, etc.

By staying enrolled in this class, the student agrees to abide by the policies described in the syllabus.

### Tentative Lecture Schedule

Tuesday	Jan	12	Syllabus Overview	
Thursday	Jan	14	Introduction to Risk Communication	Slovic
Tuesday	Jan	19	Risk Perception	Slovic, Gigerenzer
Thursday	Jan	21	Availability and Judgment Heuristics	Tversky and Kahneman
Tuesday	Jan	26	Anchoring, correlation, causation, and control	TBA
Thursday	Jan	28	Numeracy	Peters
Tuesday	Feb	2	Affect, Motivated Reasoning, and Risk	Slovic
Thursday	Feb	4	Psychological Distance	Spence
Tuesday	Feb	9	Norms	Schultz, Prentice and Miller
Thursday	Feb	11	Expert vs. Public Risk Perception and Information Seeking	Powell and Leiss, Kahlor
Tuesday	Feb	16	Information Seeking part 2	Cline & Hayes, Jolie
Thursday	Feb	18	Source Credibility and Trust	Slovic, Trumbo
Tuesday	Feb	23	Behavioral	TBA

			Decision Making	
Thursday	Feb	25	Social Amplification of Risk	Kasperson, Scherer and Cho
Tuesday	Mar	1	Mass Media and Judgments of Risk	Leiserowitz
Thursday	Mar	3	Identifying Objectives and Audience	Chap 7 and 8
Tuesday	Mar	8	Review Session	
Thursday	Mar	10	Exam 1	
Tuesday	Mar	15	Spring Break	
Thursday	Mar	17	Spring Break	
Tuesday	Mar	22	Developing Risk Messages	Chap 9 and 13
Thursday	Mar	24	Visual Representations of Risks	Chap 14
Tuesday	Mar	29	Statistical vs. Narrative Messages	Greene
Thursday	Mar	31	Fear Appeals & Nutrition Labels	Downs
Tuesday	April	5	Gain-framing/Loss-framing	O'Keefe
Thursday	April	7	Methods and Planning	10 and 12
Tuesday	April	12	Technology in Risk Communication	Chap 18
Thursday	April	14	Risk Communication Evaluation	Chap 20, Mebane
Tuesday	April	19	Ethical Concerns	Chap 5, Lapinski
Thursday	April	21	Review Session	
Monday	May	2	Exam 2	