

COMMUNICATION 3333: Crisis Communication
209 W 18th Avenue Room 160
Wednesdays and Fridays 9:35 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.
Spring 2017

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| Instructor: Lanier Frush Holt, Ph.D. | | Office hours: 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Wednesdays and Fridays, and by appointment; 3080 Derby Hall |
| Best way to reach me: e-mail: holt.341@osu.edu | | Phone: (614) 292-7438 |
| Teaching Assistant: Michael Gilbert | e-mail: gilbert.611@osu.edu | Office hours: 11 AM – 12:30 PM Thursday or by appointment; 3075 Derby |

Course Description: The most popular major in both journalism and communication courses across the country are public relations/crisis communication for two reasons: first, these professions account for the most jobs in the profession, and second, successful public relations handling of crises are often the difference between companies remaining financially solvent (e.g. Tylenol) or becoming euphemisms for failures in industry (see Enron).

Every day something happens in the world of business, economics, and/or in the lives of celebrities that involve crises. These range from little known like sex scandals at NASA to well-known incidents like the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown and BP Oil Spill that cost lives and will affect the biological infrastructure of a region for generations to come.

Companies and well-known individuals know the value of good crisis communication professionals. For example, Target has been sued for discriminating against the blind and dumping toxic waste, yet is known as a good corporate citizen, while Wal-Mart is widely known for its' lawsuits and episodes of corporate malfeasance. The difference in perception is crisis communication. In sports, Pittsburgh Steelers Quarterback Ben Roethlisberger has been charged with rape on several occasions and received a four-game suspension after being acquitted. Former OSU Quarterback Terrelle Pryor was suspended for five NFL games and banned from playing at Ohio State for five years for getting free tattoos, selling his own stuff and signing his name on memorabilia. CBS Sports reported that Pryor contributed to OSU making \$64 million while he was here; his "egregious indiscretions" net him \$2,500. Roethlisberger eventually became a Super Bowl MVP and is potentially a Hall of Fame player. Pryor is a pariah who has now been switched to wide receiver in Cleveland. Was the difference in perception based on

performance, race, or public relations management? Pryor was the one-time high school player of the year and went to Ohio State. Roethlisberger went to Miami of Ohio. Not only did things turn out differently for them, but the perception of them is vastly different as well. The difference is, in part, due to how their professionals – not they themselves – handled their crises.

In this course, you will examine theories and concepts that lay at the intersections of communication, business, social psychology, and interpersonal relationships. We will also address historic and contemporary examples of crises in order to give you both a theoretical and hands-on approach to crisis communication and an understanding of how it relates to your daily world.

This course will be a challenge, and you will have to work. Be prepared.

Required Text: There is no standard textbook for the course. All of the readings will come from scholarly communication articles (*all of which have been provided for you via Carmen*) and articles from contemporary news articles relating to the topic being discussed that day. If you have difficulty receiving or understanding the materials, please contact the instructor or the teaching assistant immediately. That is why you pay your money to attend OSU and why we are here.

Course Website: Check the homepage regularly for announcements, course changes, or other matters related to the course.

Course Requirements: Students are required to be active participants in discussions and to answer questions when called upon.

Here is a synopsis of the assignments and point values for the semester:

Point Values per Assignment

| Assignment | Point Value | Maximum Semester Points |
|------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| Test 1 | 50 | 50 |
| Test 2 | 50 | 100 |
| Debate | 50 | 150 |
| Final Exam | 100 | 250* |

Total number of semester points: 250*

Course Policies: There are very few course policies, but they are firm: tests, extra credit work, and missed debates/classes **cannot** be made up unless there is a verifiable reason **in advance**. If you miss an assignment, test or other graded element, you must have documentation to make up the assignment, examples of which include a signed doctor's note, the program from the event you are attending, or prior permission from the instructor, Dr. Holt, not the teaching assistant. If you are late, miss an assignment, or miss class for any reason, **do not** expect me, or the teaching assistant, to catch you up or tell you what you missed. As you will hear several times, your education is your responsibility. Welcome to adulthood. On a related note, if you are planning to miss class, **NEVER** ask us if you're going to miss something by not coming to class. That is the purpose of classmates. Also, if you are going to miss class, you need not send the teaching assistant, or myself, an e-mail letting us know why. Also, if you are kicked out of class (for whatever reason) on a day in which we have an exam, you will NOT BE ABLE TO MAKE UP THE EXAM unless expressly given permission by Dr. Holt, who has the final say on such matters.

Debates: During the course, we will also have a series of debates. ALL STUDENTS ARE REQUIRED TO ATTEND EACH DEBATE REGARDLESS OF IF THEY ARE PRESENTING OR NOT OUT OF RESPECT FOR THEIR CLASSMATES. As college students, you are preparing for your profession; in much the same way that you would not miss a meaningful day of work, you should not miss the debates. Students should dress professionally for the debate ONLY on the days in which they are presenting, and will be evaluated as such in much the same way that you are evaluated during a job interview and in your occupation based on the degree to which you appear professional. **Students who do NOT attend the debate will receive a ZERO on the assignment REGARDLESS OF IF THEY HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THEIR DEBATE OR NOT. This is non-negotiable.**

Also, students who do NOT show up on the date groups are selected will be randomly placed into groups of the professor's choosing. Students who are not in class will NOT have spots saved for them in groups of their choosing unless they have prior authorization from the professor for medical or family emergencies or are absent due to athletic responsibilities as determined by The Ohio State University athletics department, no exceptions.

Academic Integrity: All students at The Ohio State University are bound by the code of student conduct (see http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asap). Any evidence of academic misconduct will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct in accordance with The Ohio State University Code of Student Conduct and the rules of faculty governance. Academic misconduct is any activity that compromises the academic integrity of the institution or subverts the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct can be found on the above website.

Reasonable Accommodations: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact me privately to discuss your specific needs. Please contact the Office for Disability Services at (614) 292-3307 in Room 150 Pomerene Hall to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

Grades

Be advised, grades are not discussed immediately after an assignment is returned. Students must wait until the next class period to discuss their grades. All grades are final after one academic week. *Appeals should first be made to the teaching assistant who will then have a say on whether the grade moves on to the instructor.* **Professor Holt has the final say on all grades and grade appeals in this course.**

Penalties (re. social media especially): Initially I am allowing students to bring their laptops and cell phones to class, as there will be times when students are called upon to look for material beyond the assigned readings online during class. However, students found using their devices for purposes beyond what is called for in class will be **docked 20 points for each instance**. Should this problem become prevalent throughout the semester an individual or ALL students' right to bring laptops, cell phones, etc., will be revoked for the semester. Students may **NEVER** text during class. **Violators will be kicked out of class for the day** and lose 5 points on their second offense and every subsequent offense. In the event that your cell phone rings in class, I can either answer it and/or you can answer it and leave with it. If my cell phone rings in class, a student will get to answer it. *There will be some special times in which I will allow students to have their cell phones on in class. I will often let you know at the start of class when this is the case.* **The determination about what counts as directly and not directly related to course work will be made solely by myself and the teaching assistant and is not up for debate with the student(s).** Students having problems with this issue should not just consider but also actually drop this course immediately.

As this course deals with a topic that is sensitive, can be controversial, and at times can be combative, students are asked to treat each other with decency and respect. Although students can speak with candor, and are indeed encouraged to do so, students should not belittle or berate their classmates, or use excessive profanity.

Also, side conversations are to be kept to a minimum unless they relate to the topic discussed in class.

Grading Scale:

| | | | |
|----|----------|----|-----------------|
| A | 93-100% | C+ | 77-79.9% |
| A- | 90-92.9% | C | 73-76.9% |
| B+ | 87-89.9% | C- | 70-72.9% |
| B | 83-86.9% | D+ | 67-69.9% |
| B- | 80-82.9% | D | 60-66.9% |
| | | E | 59.9% and below |

Extra credit points: It is solely at the discretion of the instructor to award extra credit points. At this time, there are no extra credit points, but some may arise as the semester progresses.

Course Schedule

Note: All readings should be done BEFORE the date listed on the syllabus, (i.e., the Jan. 19th readings should be done prior to class on Jan. 19th), as that is when material related to the readings will be discussed. Also, be advised the readings will not be discussed in detail during the class. Readings augment what is discussed in class and are **not** merely rehashing the topic.

As mentioned earlier, whenever possible, a link or the actual reading(s), will be made available to you via Carmen. However, in some instances you may have to look up some materials on your own. We will discuss how to find such readings in class as it will be an invaluable tool should you move on to graduate school.

The list of readings and dates they will be discussed is **tentative and may be changed** depending on the speed in which we get through the material, events that transpire in the real world (e.g., if the Columbus public schools test scores scandal had broken this semester and we had planned to talk about another topic the syllabus would be amended to take advantage of that issue). Also, readings may be added to, and deleted from, the syllabus as the semester progresses. Changes will be announced either via electronic medium(s) or in class.

TENTATIVE Course Schedule

| Date | Topic | Readings | Responsibilities/ In-class work |
|--|---|--|------------------------------------|
| Wednesday , Jan. 11 th | Course expectations detailed | | Bring syllabus |
| Friday, Jan. 13 th | Asteroid: The value of communication/public relations in crises | | |
| Wednesday , Jan. 18 th | Rumors: How to handle what people say your organization thinks they said. | Alexander: Crash Course in Managing Rumours Doorley & Garcia – Rumor Has It Dilenschneider – Rumor has It: The Art of Managing Speculation | |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understanding the real world and value of communication and public relations during crises | | THEORIES USED: Coomb's Situational Crisis Management theory; Benoit's Image Restoration Typology | |
| Friday, Jan. 20 th | Image Repair: Dow Corning's Breast Implant Fiasco and repairing corporate respect | Brinson & Benoit: Dow Corning's Image Repair Strategies in the Breast Implant Crisis | |
| Wednesday , Jan. 25 th | Managing Corporate Reputation and Financial Crises | Weber, Erickson, & Stone: Corporate Management: Citibank's Use of Image Restoration Strategies During the U.S. Banking Crisis | |
| Friday, Jan. 27 th | Volkswagen: The People Mover moved People, but not like they hoped | | |

| Date | Topic | Readings | Responsibilities/ In-class work |
|--|---|--|------------------------------------|
| Wednesday, Feb. 1 st | Tylenol: The textbook case on how to handle crisis communication | | |
| Friday, Feb. 3 rd | Test 1 Review Session | | |
| Wednesday, Feb. 8 th | Test 1: (25 questions: 50 points; 2 points per question) | | |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understanding the role of media, what they do, how to handle them and how not to handle them | | Theories USED: Neo-cognitive Association and Cultivation | |
| Friday, Feb. 10 th | Immediate Crisis Situations in Higher Education | School Shootings and Handling Crises like Ohio State 2016 | |
| Wednesday, Feb. 15 th | Tiger Woods and crisis communication done wrong | | |
| Friday, Feb. 17 th | Target vs. Wal-Mart: is it just public relations or are they really different companies (ethically)? | | |
| Wednesday, Feb. 22 nd | The BP and Exxon Oil Spills: Examining the difference modern technology makes in how media cover a crisis | Gill, Ritchie, et al. – The Exxon Valdez & BP Oil Spills: A Comparison of Initial Social and Psychological Impacts | |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Examining how to handle culturally and racially sensitive issues; also, how to understand race and manage when your organization is considered racist | | THEORIES USED: Priming, Agenda-Setting, and Framing | |

| Date | Topic | Readings | Responsibilities/ In-class work |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Friday, Feb. 24 th | Crisis Communication: When Disasters hit! (Hurricane Katrina) | Giroux – The Politics of Disposability The National Review – The Blame Game | |
| Wednesday, March 1 st | Ferguson, Dayton, Cleveland, New York City, et al.: How do you communicate when your organization is considered racist? | Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, "Looking Deathworthy: Perceived Stereotypicality of Black Defendants Predicts Capital-Sentencing Outcomes." Dixon, "Psychological Reactions to Crime News Portrayals of Black Criminals: Understanding the Moderating Roles of Prior News Viewing and Stereotype Endorsement." Hurwitz & Peffley, "Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes" | Showing video about the climate surrounding Ferguson pre-and post-Michael Brown |
| Friday, March 3 rd | South Carolina and the Confederate flag: Recouping trust and/or removing race as an issue? | | Debate topics given |
| Wednesday, March 8 th | Groups selected <i>(Persons not in a group will be forced into a group of professor's choosing)</i> In-class work day | | |
| Friday, March 10 th | In-class work day | | |

| Date | Topic | Readings | Responsibilities/ In-class work |
|---|---|--|------------------------------------|
| March 13 th – March 17 th | SPRING BREAK (No classes scheduled) | | |
| Wednesday , March 22 nd | Press Conferences and/or Debates Midterm Press Conference: Maximum of 50 points Mandatory Attendance | | |
| Friday, March 24 th | Press Conferences and/or Debates Midterm Press Conference: Maximum of 50 points Mandatory Attendance | | |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Examine the roots of anger, aggression and how social media helps fans and can be used to eliminate crises; learn how social media makes crises different today than in the past | | THEORIES: Cognitive-Neoassociation; Crisis Decision Theory | |
| Wednesday , March 29 th | Press Conferences and/or Debates Midterm Press Conference: Maximum of 50 points Mandatory Attendance | | |
| Friday, March 31 st | Dealing with an Angry Public: Handling crisis after your organization has done wrong | Berkowitz: On the Formation and Regulation of Anger and Aggression | |
| LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Understanding what happen(ed) when you work for institutions the government regulates and those regulations fail the public? | | THEORIES USED: Fink's Stage Theory; Benoit's Image Restoration Theory | |
| Wednesday , April 5 th | Car troubles: Toyota's brake and floor pad controversies | Heller & Darling – Toyota in Crisis: Denial and Mismanagement | |

| Date | Topic | Readings | Responsibilities/ In-class work |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|------------------------------------|
| Friday, April 7 th | Takata Airbags: Today and Tomorrow's Problem | Can Takata Survive After Airbag Scandal? – Sophia Yan (CNN – Money, Nov. 2, 2015) Takata Airbag Recall is Worse than We Thought – Chris Isidore (CNN – Money, Feb. 3, 2016). | |
| Wednesday, April 12 th | Test 2 Review Session | | |
| Friday, April 14 th | Test 2 (50 points: 25 questions; 2 points per question) | | |
| Wednesday, April 19 th | Honeywell: managing crisis communication during a merger/acquisition (a first-hand account). | | |
| Friday, April 21 st | Final Exam Review session | | |
| Wednesday, April 26 th | Final Exam (Cumulative: 100 points; 50 questions) 10 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. <i>And no, you cannot take it early. This is already the EARLIEST time finals are taking place this year!!</i> | | |

About your professor: Dr. Lanier Frush Holt is an award-winning professor having earned the College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award – the only totally student-nominated award at The Ohio State University – in his first year at OSU. The award recognizes Dr. Holt as the top professor amongst more than 1,000 eligible faculty members at OSU. In addition, he has been recognized for teaching excellence at both Butler University and Indiana University, where he taught prior to coming to OSU.

Holt teaches Crisis Communication, Intercultural Communication, and Media Law & Ethics at OSU. He previously taught public relations at Butler University, business

writing in the prestigious Kelley School of Business at Indiana University, and several journalism, writing, and public relations courses at IU.

Holt earned his undergraduate degree in African American studies and a minor in political science at the University of Minnesota where he also ran the 400 meters for the Gopher track team. He earned his Masters in Journalism, specializing in political communication, and a Ph.D. in Mass Communication, examining the effect media messages have on the perceptions of people of color, women, and other marginalized groups, from Indiana University.

In addition to teaching, Holt is an award-winning researcher and scholar having earned the Top Faculty paper award in the Electronic News division at a national American Educators for Journalism & Mass Communication conference for a paper that examines if public attitudes toward the Don't Ask Don't Tell policy moved in lockstep or discordant with the media's coverage and political elite's opinion of the issue.

Prior to his return to academia, Holt was an award-winning newspaper reporter. He has worked as a staff reporter for the Rochester *Post-Bulletin*, was one of only a handful of students selected nationally to intern at the *Chicago Tribune*, and was a freelance reporter for the *Indianapolis Star*. He also worked for several years in communications at World Headquarters for Honeywell Inc., the company's aerospace business unit Sensor & Guidance Products, and done public relations for the Minneapolis NAACP.

He hails from Ford Heights, Illinois, which is located south of Chicago roughly between the city's south side and Gary, Ind.