

SYLLABUS SP23

COMM 3333: Crisis Communication

Cunz Hall 140
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:45 p.m. – 2:05 p.m.
Spring 2023

Instructor:

Instructor: Sophie L. Kjaervik

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Email address: kjaervik.1@osu.edu (best way to reach me)

Office hours: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays on [Zoom](#) (ID: 924 1723 0754; PW: 058924).

Course Description:

The most popular major in both journalism and communication courses across the country is public relations/crisis communication for two reasons: first, this field accounts for most of the jobs in the profession; and second, successful public relations handling of crises is 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, or in the lives of celebrities that involve crises. These range from little known incidents, like the three people that were killed at Kings Island on the same day or the Proud Boys terrorizing drag shows across the US, to well-known incidents like the chaos at Twitter and the economic consequences of the war in Ukraine.

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 wrongdoing. This difference in perception is crisis communication. In sports, Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson was hit with another sexual misconduct lawsuit while suspended from eleven NFL games for sexual misconduct. Arizona Cardinals wide receiver DeAndre Hopkins was suspended for six games for violating the league's performance enhancing drug policy. Penn State tried to cover up child sex abuse involving a coach for more than a

decade, and former OSU running back Ezekiel Elliott was suspended from six NFL games for what he did at Ohio State, which was before he stepped onto an NFL field.

Why do you think some companies and some players get less negative coverage than others who have committed similar crimes, or worse? The differences is part due to how their professionals handle their crises, but there are several reasons, and most will be discussed in Crisis Communication.

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 challenging and you will have to work – be prepared.

Mode of Delivery:

This course will be taught in person every Tuesday and Thursday (except where noted on the syllabus). Slides from the course will **not** be shared with you, so be prepared to take notes.

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/Canvas*) and contemporary news articles relating to the topic being discussed that day. If you have difficulty receiving or understanding the materials, please contact the instructor immediately. That is why you pay your money to attend OSU, and why we are here.

Course Website:

Check the homepage on Carmen 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
Media Statement	50	50
Quiz 1	25	75
Quiz 2	25	100
Press Conference	100	200
Final Quiz	50	250*

Total number of semester points: 250*

Course Policies:

There are very few course policies, but they are firm: quizzes, extra credit work, and missed debates/classes **cannot** be made up unless there is a verifiable reason **in advance**. If you miss an assignment, quiz, 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. If you are late, miss an assignment, or miss class for any reason, **do not** expect me, 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 me, 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 a quiz, you will not be able to make up the quiz** unless expressly given permission by the instructor.

Media Crisis Statement:

During the course, you will create a social media crisis statement to address a company crisis. In this scenario, you are the professional hired by the company to make the crisis 'go away'. In most crisis communication situation, a responsible organization is expected to respond on social media. Therefore, it is important to know how to provide a good media respond. This is the purpose of this assgmt. First, consider what risk or concerns the crisis poses to your audience (identify your audience). Consider whether *your* company was at fault, what tone you should use, how you can help those impacted, and how you can reassure those impacted. The crises situation can be a **natural disaster or emergency** (e.g., Wine To Water's emergency relief effort), **product recall** (e.g., Johnson & Johnson sunscreen product recall), or a **data breach** (e.g., JBS USA). ***Do not use these examples.**

Press Conferences:

During the course, we will also have a series of press conferences. All students are required to attend each press conference 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 press conference. Students should **dress professionally** for the press conference 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 each day of the press conference will receive a ZERO** on the assignment regardless of if they have participated in their group's press conference presentation or not. Students who do **not show up when groups are decided will be forced into a group of the professor's choosing.** Also, **students cannot do this assignment alone.** This is non-negotiable.

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.

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF (Mental Health Statement):

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting ccs.osu.edu or calling 614-292-5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Current events: As citizens of an ever-changing cultural world, students are **required to speak on current events at the start of each class and to read a daily news source before the start of each class.**

Trigger warning:

Also, be advised, this course deals with controversial and hot-button topics that may cause you anger, frustration, guilt, and a host of other emotions that you may not normally experience in an educational setting. If you feel you are experiencing any of these emotions, please let me know and also seek help from a medical or mental health professional. Sharing such information with me will not be made available to the class and will not adversely affect your grade.

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 098 Baker 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 can be made the instructor.

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 20 points for every subsequent offense. In the event that your cell phone rings in class, you can answer it and leave with 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 me. Students having problems with this issue should not just consider but also actually drop this course immediately.

This course deals with sensitive topics, topics that can be controversial, and at times this course can be combative. As such, 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. The classroom is a space where everyone are to feel safe to speak!

Grading Scale:

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

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.

Attendance, participation and discussions

Credit hours and work expectation:

This is a 3-credit-hour course. According to Ohio State policy, students should expect around 3 hours per week of time spent on direct instruction (instructor content and Carmen activities, for example) in addition to 6 hours of homework (reading and assignment preparation, for example) to receive a grade of (C) average. [ASC Honors](#) provides an excellent guide to scheduling and study expectations.

Faculty feedback and response time:

The following information is provided to give you an idea of my availability throughout the course. Remember that you can call **614-688-HELP** at any time if you have a technical issues.

- **Grading and feedback:** You can expect feedback within 7-10 days.
- **Email:** You can expect a response within 48-hours on school days.

Discussion and communication guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. Above all, please remember to be respectful and thoughtful.

- **Tone and civility:** I want a supportive learning community where everyone feels safe and where people can disagree amicably. I work very hard to provide a positive learning experience. Keep this in mind and remain civilized and respectful in your emails and discussions.
- **Citing your sources:** When we have academic discussions, cite your sources to back up what you say. (For the textbook or other course materials, please use APA style. For online sources, be sure to include a link.)

Course technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

Quizzes:

All quizzes will be given online via CarmenCanvas. Unless prior changes have been announced, the quiz will open on the date listed for the quiz on the syllabus. Students can take the quiz at any point on the date (Eastern Standard Time) the quiz opens. However, students **will NOT** have the entire day to do the quiz. Quizzes will only be open for the time allotted – usually **80 continuous minutes** for regular quizzes, with extra time added for those with verified needs from OSU for time extensions – for the quizzes. **The allotted time starts the moment the quiz is opened online.** Meaning, if a student, not requiring extra time, opens the quiz at 1 p.m. EST, for example, the quiz will shut off at 2:20 p.m. EST. When quizzes close, they will not be reopened without permission from Professor Kjærvik. Also remember, quizzes cannot be made up if they are missed.

Carmen:

Carmen, Ohio State's Learning Management System, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit [Carmen.osu.edu](https://carmen.osu.edu). Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit my.osu.edu

- Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen>
- **This course requires use of Carmen (Ohio State's learning management system) and other online communication and multimedia tools. If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with your instructor.**
 - [Carmen accessibility](#)

Carmen Zoom Office Hours:

- Office hours will be held through Ohio State’s conferencing platform, Carmen Zoom. A separate guide to accessing Carmen Zoom and my office hours is posted on the course Carmen page under Files.
- Students may use the audio and video functions if a webcam and microphone are available. If not, there is still a chat function within Carmen Zoom for the student to live chat with me during office hours.
- **Carmen Zoom** help guide:
 - **Self-Service and Chat support:** <http://ocio.osu.edu/selfservice>
 - **Phone:** 614-688-HELP (4357)
 - **Email:** 8help@osu.edu
 - **TDD:** 614-688-8743

Necessary equipment:

- Computer: current Mac (OS X) or PC (Windows 7+) with high-speed internet connection
- Web cam and microphone

Necessary software:

- Word processor with the ability to save files under .doc, .docx, .rtf, or .pdf. Most popular word processing software programs including Microsoft Word and Mac Pages have these abilities.
- OSU students have access to Microsoft Office products free of charge. To install, please visit https://osuitsm.service-now.com/selfservice/kb_view.do?sysparm_article=kb04733

COVID-19 and Illness Policies

University COVID policies

Student illness or absence

If *you* are too ill to participate in this course due to COVID-19 or another illness, please contact me as soon as you are able and provide evidence (e.g., an image of the COVID results with your name on a screen shot for example) of a positive COVID test or need to quarantine from being exposed to the virus or someone who is infected. Alternate assignments or extensions might be arranged.

Instructor illness or absence

If the *instructor* is too ill to teach the course for a period of time, the designated backup for this course will step in. You will be notified via email from the School of Communication.

Course Schedule

Note: All readings should be done **BEFORE** the date listed on the syllabus, (i.e., the January 17th readings should be done prior to class on January 17th), 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/Canvas. 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 and events that transpire in the real world (e.g., if the Urban Meyer controversy had broken during the semester we would talk about it rather than what is listed on the syllabus). 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
Week 1 Tuesday, Jan. 10 th	Course expectations detailed		Bring syllabus
Thursday, Jan. 12 th	Asteroid: The value of communication/public relations in crises		
Week 2 Tuesday, Jan. 17 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	

Date	Topic	Readings	Responsibilities/ In-class work
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	
Thursday, Jan. 19 th	Managing Corporate Reputation and Financial Crises	Weber et al.: Corporate Management: Citibank's Use of Image Restoration Strategies During the U.S. Banking Crisis	
Week 3 Tuesday, Jan. 24 st	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	
Thursday, Jan. 26 th	Quiz 1 Review Session		
Week 4 Tuesday, Jan. 31 st	Quiz 1: (25 questions: 25 points; 1 points per question) On Carmen		
Thursday, Feb. 2 nd	Tylenol: The textbook case on how to handle crisis communication		
Week 5 Tuesday, Feb. 7 th	Volkswagen Crisis: Dirty Money and the 'Clean' Diesel Problem		Video: Hard NOx
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	
Thursday, Feb. 9 th	FIFA World Cup in Qatar and crisis communication done wrong		

Date	Topic	Readings	Responsibilities/ In-class work
Week 6 Tuesday, Feb. 14 th	Social Media: Why Online Reality IS Reality to your Client	Gonzalez-Herrero & Smith: Crisis Management 2.0: Organizational Principles to Manage Crisis in an Online World	
Thursday, Feb. 16 th	Responding to crisis on social media		Media Statement
LEARNING OBJECTIVE: Learning how to communicate when your organization or client is considered racist or sexist, and the tremendous consequences of doing it wrong.		THEORIES USED: Priming, Agenda-Setting, and Framing	
Week 7 Tuesday, Feb. 21 st	How do you communicate when your organization is considered racist?	<p>Correll, Park, Judd, & Wittenbrink, "The Influence of Stereotypes on Decisions to Shoot"</p> <p>Eberhardt, Davies, Purdie-Vaughns, & Johnson, "Looking Deathworthy: Perceived Stereotypicality of Black Defendants Predicts Capital-Sentencing Outcomes."</p> <p>Dixon, "Psychological Reactions to Crime News Portrayals of Black Criminals: Understanding the Moderating Roles of Prior News Viewing and Stereotype Endorsement."</p> <p>Hurwitz & Peffley, "Public Perceptions of Race and Crime: The Role of Racial Stereotypes"</p>	

Date	Topic	Readings	Responsibilities/ In-class work
Thursday, Feb. 23 rd	Press Conference Topics Announced (No Class)		
Week 8 Tuesday, Feb. 28 th	Groups selected day <i>Group work day</i> (Persons not in a group will be forced into a group of professor's choosing)		
Thursday, March 2 nd	<i>Group work day</i>		
Week 9 Tuesday, March 7 th	Press Conferences and/or Debates (5-6 people per group; 10 groups presenting; 7-8 minutes each) Midterm Press Conference: Maximum of 100 points Mandatory Attendance		
Thursday, March 9 th	Press Conferences and/or Debates (5-6 people per group; 10 groups presenting; 7-8 minutes each) Midterm Press Conference: Maximum of 100 points Mandatory Attendance		
Week 10 Tuesday, March 14 th	SPRING BREAK (No Class) <i>March 13 – 17th</i>		
Thursday, March 16 th			
Week 11 Tuesday, March 21 th	South Carolina, the Confederate flag, how did we get here, and what does this have to do with my future employment?	Holt, L.F. "Bringing Their Tomorrow into Today: Why it's Essential to Teach Diversity in Advertising Education."	
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 USED: Cognitive-Neoassociation; Crisis Decision Theory	

Date	Topic	Readings	Responsibilities/ In-class work
Thursday, March 23 th	Dealing with an Angry Public: Handling crisis after your organization has done wrong	Berkowitz: On the Formation and Regulation of Anger and Aggression	
Week 12 Tuesday, March 28 st	Target vs. Wal-Mart: is it just public relations or are they really different companies (ethically)?		
Thursday, March 30 th	Quiz 2 Review Session		
Week 13 Tuesday, April 4 th	Quiz 2 (25 points: 25 questions; 1 points per question)		
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	
Thursday, April 6 th	Car troubles: Toyota's brake and floor pad controversies	Heller & Darling – Toyota in Crisis: Denial and Mismanagement Gill, Picou, & Ritchie – The Exxon Valdez & BP Oil Spills: A Comparison of Initial Social and Psychological Impacts	
Week 14 Tuesday, April 11 th	The NRA: A nonprofit organization with negative effect on company relations		
Thursday, April 13 th	Crisis Communication: When Disasters hit! (Hurricane Katrina)	Giroux – The Politics of Disposability The National Review – The Blame Game	

Date	Topic	Readings	Responsibilities/ In-class work
Week 15 Tuesday, April 18 th	Honeywell: Managing crisis communication during a merger/acquisition (a first-hand account).	Deutsch & Holson: “Allied Signal and Honeywell to Announce Merger Today” Tharp – Bonsignore Out at Honeywell	
Thursday, April 20 th	Final Quiz Review Session		
Week 16 Tuesday, April 25 th	Final Quiz <i>No, you cannot take it early.</i>		

About your professor: Professor Sophie L. Kjaervik teaches diverse courses in the School of Communication. She has previously taught ‘Violence in Media and Violence in Society’, ‘Mass Communication and Society’, and ‘Research Methods’. She has been the teaching assistant for this course as well as many others.

Prof. Kjaervik is an aggression researcher, with focus on (1) ways of reducing aggression and (2) individual differences in aggressiveness. She is from Norway and earned her master’s degree in psychology, specializing in cultural psychology, from the University of Oslo (UiO). Currently, she is a Ph.D. Candidate in Mass Communication, in the School of Communication at OSU, where she examines ways of reducing anger, aggression and violence. She earned her undergraduate degree at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) where she also played basketball.