

COMM 3332 RISK COMMUNICATION

Spring 2025 #22477

Class Hours: Wednesdays & Fridays 11:10am-12:30pm

Classroom: Ramseyer Hall 115

Professor: HyunYi Cho, PhD

Office: Derby Hall 3020

Office Hours: By appointment. Email me to schedule a meeting.

Email: cho.919@osu.edu; For timely response or accurate documentation of your attendance related communication, please do not use Carmen mail.

Previous Coursework Expectations

Students are expected to have completed freshman and sophomore-level communication theory and research methods courses prior to enrolling in this course.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide students with theory-based knowledge about risk perceptions and principles for designing effective risk communication messages. Students will learn concepts and theories related to risk perception and risk communication, how to apply these theories and principles in designing communication strategies and actions for preventing and controlling risk, and how to evaluate and improve the efficacy of risk communication.

Mode of Delivery

This is an in-person course. Students are expected to attend class and actively engage with peers and the instructor. Each week, students will read assigned materials and complete an online preview quiz. Students will also participate in classroom assignments to apply theories and concepts to various risk communication situations.

Course Learning Goals

The goal of this course is to provide students with comprehensive knowledge of theories and principles of effective strategic risk communication and to foster their ability to apply this knowledge to diverse risk communication contexts.

Course Learning Outcomes

By actively participating in and completing course requirements, students should be able to do the following by the end of the semester:

1. Analyze the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of risk perception;
2. Understand the theories and principles of effective risk communication;
3. Apply risk communication theories and principles to the development and evaluation of risk communication messages and programs.

Course Reading Materials

Required: Journal articles. See the Course Calendar and Reading List for the assigned materials for each topic. The full text of the articles is available on Carmen.

Grading

Course Requirements

| Requirements | Points | Unit |
|--------------------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| Syllabus quiz | 3 | Individual |
| Student survey | 5 | Individual |
| Preview quizzes | | |
| 5 pts x 6 (out of 8 quizzes) | 30 | Individual |
| In-class assignments | | |
| 3 pts x 6 (out of 12 assignments) | 18 | Team/Individual |
| Discussion prompts | | |
| 5 pts x 4 | 20 | Individual |
| Practice exam | 5 | Individual |
| Exam 1 | 85 | Individual |
| Exam 2 | 110 | Individual |
| Risk message project | | |
| Progress report 1 | 5 | Team |
| Progress report 2 | 10 | Team |
| Presentation | 20 | Team |
| Teamwork evaluation | 10 | Individual |
| Other teams' presentation evaluation | 15 | Individual |
| In-class participation | 20 | Individual |
| Total | 356 | |

Grading Scale

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

Note that Carmen does not round up fractions. I do not round up grades.

Assignments

Preview quizzes

The goal of the preview quizzes is to help students engage with the reading materials prior to the class meeting and be prepared for in-class discussion. Each quiz will typically contain about 2-3 questions of various types including true/false, multiple choice, multiple answers, and short answer. Unless noted otherwise, the quizzes will be activated on Carmen by 5pm on Fridays and will close at 11:59pm on the following Tuesday, the night before the next class on Wednesday, during which the topic will be discussed. There will be a total of eight preview quizzes and two lowest scores, including zeros from missed quizzes, will be dropped in the computation of the scores for the final grade. Because ample time is given for these quizzes, two scores will be dropped, and the quiz content will be reviewed the next class or calendar day, no make-ups will be given.

In-class Assignments

In-class assignments are designed to help students better understand and retain the concepts and theories discussed. These assignments will typically ask teams to analyze and apply risk communication concepts to various real-life situations for problem solving. Responses will be in the form of structured essays, and the format will vary per assignment. Because the timing of topic/concept coverage cannot be precisely predicted, the date and times of these assignments cannot be given in advance. Out of the total of 12 assignments, six low scores, including zeros from missed assignments, will be dropped in the computation of the scores for the final grade. Since up to 50% of the scores will be dropped, no makeups will be given.

Discussion prompts

Risk communication situations are frequently complex and challenging, requiring critical and informed debate. Over the semester, discussion prompt assignments will be activated for four topics on Canvas: see the Course Calendar for due dates. Each prompt should have about 100 words, including a discussion question and your own response to the question. Both the question and response should facilitate and stimulate others' responses. Questions should be based on an accurate understanding of the readings and demonstrate critical reflection on their applicability to diverse risk communication situations. A portion of class time will be dedicated to the discussion of these prompts.

Exams

Two online exams using Carmen and Honorlock are scheduled for the semester: 2/19/2025 and 4/24/2025. Students are required to have a valid student ID, webcam (USB or internal) with a microphone, and a strong and stable internet connection to take these exams. Exam 1 will cover all content presented prior to the exam. Exam 2 will be comprehensive, covering all topics from the course. Each exam will be on Carmen and proctored using Honorlock (see Course Technology below) and in a closed-book format. Exams can cover any course materials including lectures, assigned reading materials, class discussion, and assignments including preview quizzes and application exercises. Each exam may include any combination of true/false, multiple choice, multiple answers,

and essay type questions.

Risk message project

This assignment asks you to identify a risk communication topic, locate an existing risk communication message about the topic, analyze strengths and weaknesses of the messages, and create a better risk communication message addressing the limitations of the existing risk communication message. The evaluation of the existing message and the design of the new message should be based on theory. The new message should be your own design. Submitting a message that was created by others as your new message is considered academic dishonesty and will result in a zero for that section of the assignment. Overall, your work will be evaluated based on the soundness of theoretical understanding and application in the evaluation of the messages and the quality of theory-based improvement of the messages. A detailed guideline will be provided on Carmen.

In-class participation

Students are expected to come to class after having read the assigned reading materials and being prepared for discussion. The instructor will evaluate the quality and quantity of participation. Quality is more important than quantity. Quality of participation is defined as the degree to which it demonstrates the student's understanding of the readings, is relevant to the theory and practice presented in the readings, stimulates other students' interest in and engagement with the topic of the day. Asking thoughtful questions is a form of class participation. Quantity is defined as the regularity of participation that facilitates learning. During online meetings (see Class Calendar), students are expected to use both the audio and video functions.

Course Policies

Attendance

Attendance is central to successfully completing this course. Missing four or more classes without written documentation of valid reasons will result in a half letter-grade reduction in your final course grade (e.g., A→A-, B+→B, C→C-, D→E). Students who miss a class should email the instructor with a valid reason and supporting documentation at cho.919@osu.edu. Do not use the Carmen email function. Verbal communication is neither required nor accepted.

Discussion and Communication Guidelines

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class. These apply to classroom behaviors and email communication. Respect for everyone in the classroom, including other students and the instructor, is essential. Rude remarks or behaviors negatively affect the classroom experience of not only the recipient but the rest of class and disrupt learning and teaching. Prejudicial remarks against other students or the instructor will not be tolerated.

Everyone is expected to contribute to learning experience in this course. For each occurrence of disruptive or distracting behavior, 5 points will be subtracted from your final total score for this class. This includes:

- Phone use, including ringing and texting,
- Three or more late arrivals or early departures without a written documentation of reason,
- And other behaviors that disrupt teaching and learning.

Late assignments

Late assignments will be graded down 10% per 24 hours unless written documentation of valid reason is provided in advance. Please note that a makeup is not applicable to the preview quizzes or in-class assignments for the following reasons. Preview quizzes: Ample time is given, two scores will be dropped, and the quiz content will be reviewed the next class or calendar day. In-class assignments: Up to 50% of the scores will be dropped in the calculation of the final grade.

Makeup exam

A make-up exam should be requested in advance with documentation of a valid reason. If approved, the make-up exam should be completed within 5 business days before or after the date on which the rest of the class takes the exam.

Faculty Feedback and Response Time

I am providing the following list to give you an idea of my intended availability throughout the course. For technical problems you can call 614-688-HELP at any time.

E-mail: I normally reply to e-mails within 24 hours on school days.

Grading and feedback: Preview quiz scores will be available immediately after it is due. Grades for application exercises will be available within 48 hours after your submission. For term assignments, grades will be available in five to seven days.

Office hours and appointments: You are strongly encouraged to use the instructor's office hours for questions about class topics, assignments, and any other issues that may hinder your performance in this course. Appointments are gladly made upon request. Please email me at: cho.919@osu.edu.

Copyright Disclaimer

The materials used in connection with this course are intended solely for the use of students officially enrolled in the course and for educational purposes associated with the course. Unauthorized use may violate copyright law and institutional policies. Do not copy, retain, or disseminate course materials.

Disability Services

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion.

If you are isolating while waiting for a COVID-19 test result, please let me know immediately. Those testing positive for COVID-19 should refer to the [Safe and Healthy Buckeyes site](#) for resources. Beyond five days of the required COVID-19 isolation period, I may rely on Student Life Disability Services to establish further reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Academic Misconduct

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/>.

Religious Accommodations

It is Ohio State's policy to reasonably accommodate the sincerely held religious beliefs and practices of all students. The policy permits a student to be absent for up to three days each academic semester for reasons of faith or religious or spiritual belief. Students planning to use religious beliefs or practices accommodations for course requirements must inform the instructor in writing no later than 14 days after the course begins. The instructor is then responsible for scheduling an alternative time and date for the course requirement, which may be before or after the original time and date of the course requirement. These alternative accommodations will remain confidential. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all course assignments are completed.

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 or someone you know are 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](tel: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](tel:614-292-5766) and 24 hour emergency help is also available 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Sexual Misconduct and Relationship Violence

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator at titleix@osu.edu.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Office of Institutional Equity:

1. Online reporting form at equity.osu.edu,
2. Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,
3. Or Email equity@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Office of Institutional Equity to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.
- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

Emergency Information

Weather or other short-term closing

Should in-person classes be canceled, we will meet virtually via CarmenZoom during our regularly scheduled time. I will share any updates via Carmen or email.

Classroom door locks

On the first day of class, we will watch this video explaining door locks and how to use them effectively in the event of an active aggressor situation:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6H_iYx-sac

Course Calendar

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The schedule and its components below are subject to revision at instructor's discretion or under extenuating circumstances. Students are responsible for regularly checking Carmen and making any necessary adjustments.

Unless noted otherwise, assignments are due at 11:59pm on the due date.

In-class assignments are not included this table as they may occur on any class day.

| Wk | Date | Topic | Scheduled assignments | Weekly readings |
|----|------|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1/8 | First class: Overview of the course | Syllabus quiz due on 1/10 | |
| | 1/10 | Introduction to risk communication | Student survey due on 1/13 | |
| 2 | 1/15 | Theoretical bases | Quiz 1 due on 1/14 | Maloney et al., 2011 |
| | 1/17 | Theoretical bases | | |
| 3 | 1/22 | Risk perceptions | Quiz 2 due on 1/21 | Slovic, 1987; Sandman, 1988 |
| | 1/24 | Risk perceptions | | |
| 4 | 1/29 | Affective & emotional aspects | Quiz 3 due on 1/28 Discussion prompt due 1/28 | Lerner et al., 2003; Sinaceur et al., 2005 |
| | 1/31 | Affective & emotional aspects | | |
| 5 | 2/5 | Social aspects | Quiz 4 due on 2/4 Discussion prompt due 2/4 | Cho, 2006; Finucane, 2000 |
| | 2/7 | Social aspects | | |
| 6 | 2/12 | Online via Zoom: Preview of Exam 1 | | Study guide 1 |
| | 2/14 | Online via Zoom: Preview of Risk Message Project (RMP) | RMP progress report 1 due on 2/17 | RMP guide |
| 7 | 2/19 | Online via Carmen Honorlock: Exam 1— Available for 45 minutes between 9am and 9pm | Required: Valid student ID, webcam with a microphone, and a strong and stable internet connection | |
| | 2/21 | Student group meetings for RMP | RMP progress report 2 due on 2/21 | |
| 8 | 2/26 | Media effects on risk perceptions | Quiz 5 due on 2/25 | Snyder & Rouse, 1995 |
| | 2/28 | Media effects on risk perceptions | | |

| Wk | Date | Topic | Scheduled assignments | Weekly readings |
|----|------|---|---|--|
| 9 | 3/5 | Societal risk | Quiz 6 due 3/4 | Cho & Kuang, 2015 |
| | 3/7 | Societal risk | | |
| 10 | 3/12 | <i>Spring break: No class</i> | | |
| | 3/14 | <i>Spring break: No class</i> | | |
| 11 | 3/19 | Risk and trust | Quiz 7 due on 3/18 Discussion prompt due 3/18 | Siegrist et al., 2000 Choung et al., 2023 |
| | 3/21 | Risk and trust | | |
| 12 | 3/26 | Risk and stigma | Quiz 8 due on 3/25 Discussion prompt due 3/25 | Smith, 2007 Pescosolido, 2013 |
| | 3/28 | Risk and stigma | | |
| 13 | 4/2 | Risk and culture | | Weber et al., 1999 |
| | 4/4 | Risk and culture | | |
| 14 | 4/9 | Student group meetings for RMP | Presentation file due on 4/10 | |
| | 4/11 | Evaluation of other team's presentations 1 | Evaluation of other teams 1 due on 4/11 | |
| 15 | 4/16 | Evaluation of other team's presentations 2 | Evaluation of other teams 2 due on 4/16 | |
| | 4/18 | Last class: Preview of Exam 2 & Course wrap-up | Teamwork evaluation due on 4/18 | Study guide 2 |
| | 4/24 | Online via Carmen Honorlock: Exam 2-- Available for 60 mins between 9:00am and 9:00pm | Required: Valid student ID, webcam with a microphone, and a strong and stable internet connection | |

Required Readings

Articles are available on Carmen under each weekly module.

Theoretical bases

Maloney, E.K., Lapinski, M.K., & Witte, K. (2011). Fear appeals and persuasion: A review and update of the extended parallel process model. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 5/6, 206-219.

Risk perceptions

Slovic, P. (1987). Risk perceptions. *Science*, 236, 280-285.

Sandman, P.M. (1988). Risk communication: Facing outrage. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 2, 235-238.

Affect and emotions

Lerner, J.S., Gonzalez, R.M., Small, D.A., & Fischhoff, B. (2003). Effects of fear and anger on perceived risks of terrorism: A national field experiment. *Psychological Sciences*, 14, 144-150.

Sinaceur, M., Heath, C., & Cole, S. (2005). Emotional and deliberative reactions to a public crisis: Mad cow disease in France. *Psychological Science*, 16, 247-254.

Social aspects

Cho, H. (2006). Influences of norm proximity and norm types on binge and non-binge drinkers. *Journal of Substance Use*, 6, 417-429.

Finucane, M.L., Slovic, P., Mertz, C.K., ... Satterfield, T.A. (2000). Gender, race, and perceived risk: The "white male" effect. *Health, Risk, & Society*, 2, 159-172.

Media effects on risk perceptions

Snyder, L. B., & Rouse, R. A. (1995). The media can have more than an impersonal impact: The case of AIDS risk perceptions and behavior. *Health Communication, 7*, 125– 145.

Societal risk

Cho, H., & Kuang, K. (2015). The societal risk reduction motivation model. In H. Cho, T.O. Reimer, & K.A. McComas (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of risk communication* (pp. 117- 131). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Risk and trust

Siegrist, M., Cvetkovich, G., & Roth, C. (2000). Salient value similarity, social trust, and risk/benefit perception. *Risk Analysis, 20*, 353-362.

Choung, H., David, P., & Ross, A. (2023). Trust in AI and its role in the acceptance of AI technologies. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction, 39*(9), 1727-1739.

Risk and stigma

Smith, R.A. (2007). Media depiction of health topics: Challenge and stigma formats. *Journal of Health Communication, 12*, 233-249.

Pescosolido, B. (2013). The public stigma of mental illness: What do we think; what do we know; what can we prove? *Journal of Health and Social Behavior, 54*(1), 1-21.

Risk and culture

Weber, E.U., Hsee, C.K., & Sokolowska, J. (1998). What folklore tells us about risk and risk taking: Cross-cultural comparisons of American, German, and Chinese proverbs. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 75*, 170-186.