

COMM 3332 RISK COMMUNICATION

Autumn 2025 #22967

Class Hours: Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:10am-12:30pm

Classroom: Page Hall 060

Professor: HyunYi Cho, PhD

Office: Derby Hall 3020

Office Hours: Tue & Thurs 12:30-1:00pm and by appointment

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

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

Requirement	Point	Unit
Syllabus check	3	Individual
Self-introduction	3	Individual
Preview quizzes		
5 pts x 6 (out of 8 quizzes)	30	Individual
In-class assignments		
5 pts x 6 (out of 10 assignments)	30	Team
Reflection exercises		
5 pts x 2 (out of 3 exercises)	10	Individual
Exam 1	75	Individual
Exam 2	90	Individual
Risk message improvement assignment		
Progress report	10	Team
Presentation	20	Team
Evaluation of peer presentations		Individual
5 pts x 2	10	
Evaluation of teamwork	10	Individual
In-class participation	20	Individual
Total	311	

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 Thursdays and will close at 11:59pm on the following Monday, the night before the next class on Tuesday, 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-up 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 ten assignments, four low scores, including zeros from missed assignments, will be dropped in the computation of the scores for the final grade. Since up to 40% of the scores will be dropped, no make-up will be given.

Reflection exercises

This reflection assignment is designed to encourage critical thinking and personal engagement with the assigned readings. After reading the article, students will select one quote that resonated with them, sparked interest, or made them disagree. They will then write a brief response explaining why they chose this quotation and what it made them think. Over the semester, reflection exercises will be activated for three topics on Carmen: see the Course Calendar for due dates. The reflection should utilize their own direct or indirect experiences, current or past events in the media, or research findings. Authenticity, specificity, and degree of application and extension will be graded. Out of total three exercises, the lowest score, including a zero from a missed work, will be dropped in calculating the final grade for this assignment. No make-up will be given.

Exams

Two in-person, in-classroom, paper and pencil exams are scheduled for the semester during class time on 10/7/2025 and 12/9/2025. Students are required to have a valid student ID to take these exams. Exam 1 will cover all content presented prior to the exam. Exam 2 will cover all content presented after exam 1. Each exam will be in a closed-book format. Exams can cover any course materials including lectures, assigned reading materials, class discussion, and assignments (e.g., preview quizzes, in-class assignments). Each exam may include any combination of true/false, multiple

choice, multiple answers, and essay type questions.

Risk message improvement assignment

The risk message improvement assignment (RIA) 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.

Students who receive less than 60% from their team members in the teamwork evaluation portion of the assignment will have their final score for this assignment adjusted according to that evaluation. For example, if your average teamwork evaluation score is 5 out of 10 (50%), and your team receives 16 out of 20 in the final presentation, your score for the final presentation will be 8, which is 50% of the team score 16.

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. A half letter-grade reduction in your final course grade will be made for every four missed classes without written documentation of valid reasons. Specifically, the first four undocumented absences will result in a half-letter-grade reduction; each additional set of four such absences will result in an additional half-letter grade reduction. 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.

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% for every hour past the deadline unless an advance request with written documentation of a valid reason has been submitted and approved. As noted above, no make-up is available for preview quizzes, in-class assignments, and reflection exercises. Preview quizzes: Ample time is given, two scores will be dropped, and the quiz content will be reviewed the next class day. In-class assignments: Up to 40% of the scores will be dropped in the calculation of the final grade. Reflection exercises: One low score out of total three will be dropped.

Missed exams

Students who fail to take an exam on the scheduled date within the designated time will receive a zero. A request for a make-up exam must include authenticated proof of a valid reason. If approved, a make-up exam must be completed within 3 days before or after the original exam date. If the approved make-up exam is not completed within 3 days, a zero will be given for 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 business days and do not respond to emails after business hours or on weekends.

Grading and feedback: Preview quiz scores will be available immediately after it is due. Grades for in-class assignments will be available within 3 business days after your submission. For other assignments, grades will be available in about 7 business 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

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 ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the [Committee on Academic Misconduct](#) (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's [Code of Student Conduct](#), and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute Academic Misconduct.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University or subvert the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so please review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If an instructor suspects that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, the instructor is obligated by University Rules to report those suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that a student violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in the course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If students have questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, they should contact the instructor.

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology, but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship, or on a course assignment unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

Religious Accommodations

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office. (Policy: Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances)

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

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 Civil Rights Compliance Office:

Online reporting form at <http://civilrights.osu.edu/>,

Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,

Or Email civilrights@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 Civil Rights Compliance Office 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.

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 Younklin 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.

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

- 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.
- 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.

Wk	Date	Topic	Assignment	Reading
1	8/26	Overview of the course	Syllabus check due on 8/28	
	8/28	Introduction to risk communication	Self-introduction due on 9/2	
2	9/2	Theoretical bases	Quiz 1 due on 9/2	Maloney et al., 2011
	9/4	Theoretical bases		
3	9/9	Risk perceptions	Quiz 2 due on 9/8	Slovic, 1987; Sandman, 1988
	9/11	Risk perceptions		
4	9/16	Affective & emotional aspects	Quiz 3 due on 9/15	Lerner et al., 2003; Sinaceur et al., 2005
	9/18	Affective & emotional aspects		
5	9/23	Social and cultural aspects	Quiz 4 due on 9/22	Cho, 2006; Murray-Johnson et al., 2001
	9/25	Social and cultural aspects	Reflection due on 9/24	
6	9/30	Preview of exam 1; RIA overview, team formation, topic selection in CLASSROOM	RIA meeting report 1 due @12:30pm	Study guide 1, RIA guide
	10/2	RIA group work: No class	RIA meeting report 2 due	
7	10/7	Exam 1 in in-person, in classroom, during class time	Required: Valid student ID	
	10/9	Media effects on risk perceptions	RIA progress report due on 10/10	Snyder & Rouse, 1995
8	10/14	Media effects on risk perceptions	Quiz 5 due on 10/14	
	10/16	<i>Autumn break: No class</i>		
9	10/21	Societal risk	Quiz 6 due 10/20	Cho & Kuang, 2015
	10/23	Societal risk		
10	10/28	Risk and trust	Quiz 7 due on 10/27	Siegrist et al., 2000
	10/30	Risk and trust	Reflection due on 10/29	Park et al., 2024

11	11/4	Risk and stigma	Quiz 8 due on 11/3	Smith, 2007
	11/6	Risk and stigma	Reflection due on 11/5	
12	11/11	<i>Veteran's day: No class</i>		
	11/13	Risk taking		
13	11/18	Risk taking		Palmgreen et al., 2001
	11/20	RIA group work: No class	RIA meeting report 3 due; Presentation file due on 12/1	
14	11/25	Preview of exam 2: Online		Study guide 2
	11/27	<i>Thanksgiving: No class</i>		
15	12/2	Evaluation of peer presentations 1: Online	Presentation file due on 12/1; Evaluation 1 due on 12/2	
	12/4	Evaluation of peer presentations 2: Online	Evaluation 2 due on 12/4	
	12/5		Teamwork evaluation due on 12/5	
16	12/9	Exam 2 in-person, in classroom, during class time	Required: Valid student ID	

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 and cultural aspects

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

Murray-Johnson, L., Witte, K., Liu, W., & Hubbell, A.P. (2001). Addressing cultural orientations in fear appeals: Promoting AIDS-protective behaviors among Mexican immigrant and African American adolescent and American and Taiwanese college students. *Journal of Health Communication*, 6(4), 335-358.

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.

Park, G., Chung, J., & Lee, S. (2024). Human vs. machine-like representation in chatbot mental health counseling: The serial mediation of psychological distance and trust on compliance intention. *Current Psychology, 43*, 4352-4363.

Risk and stigma

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

Hauser, D.J., & Schwarz, N. (2015). The war on prevention: Bellicose cancer metaphors hurt (some) prevention intentions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 41*, 66-77.

Risk taking

Palmgreen, P., Donohew, L., Lorch, E.P., Hoyle, R.H., & Stephenson, M.T. (2001). Television campaigns and adolescent marijuana use: Tests of sensation seeking targeting. *American Journal of Public Health, 91*, 292-296.