

COMM 514: Rhetoric & Philosophy of Crisis Management

Spring 2016

Dr. Ronald C. Arnett

Duquesne University

TEXTBOOKS:

Coombs, W. T. (2014). *Applied crisis communication & crisis management*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Littlefield, R., & Sellnow, T. L. (Eds.). (2015). *Risk and crisis communication: Navigating the tensions between organizations and the public*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Ulmer, R. R., Sellnow, T. L., & Seeger, M. W. (2014). *Effective crisis communication: Moving from crisis to opportunity*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

COURSE OVERVIEW, GOALS, LEARNING OBJECTIVES, AND OUTCOMES:

Rhetoric & Philosophy of Crisis Management examines the theory and practice of crisis management in multiple communication settings. This course examines major scholars and works, presenting an overview of crisis management through comprehensive midterm and final projects. Students will recognize the major metaphors and theories of crisis management, be able to list 3-5 scholars relevant to crisis management, and articulate the meaning and practice of crisis management for various crisis events. Assessment will take place through three class presentations and a final course paper of 25 pages.

This course satisfies the following National Communication Association's Learning Outcomes in Communication (LOC):

- *LOC #2: Employ communication theories, perspectives, principles, and concepts*
- *LOC #4: Create messages appropriate to the audience, purpose, and context*
- *LOC #6: Demonstrate the ability to accomplish communicative goals*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Before the first week of the course, students will be placed into four groups. Groups will prepare four presentations. The presentations are worth a combined 50% of the course grade.

1. Presentations #1, #2, and #3. For Presentations 1-3, each group will prepare 10-minute presentations per person and present an outline of the assigned essays. Groups should post outlines to Blackboard 24 hours prior to in-class presentation and should bring a hard copy of the outline to class for the instructor. Presentations should include:

- Thesis of each chapter
- The major questions/issues addressed.
- 1-3 metaphors in each essay.
- Explanation of significance of each metaphor for the study of Crisis Management and Communication.

PRESENTATION #1 topic: *Risk and Crisis Communication: Navigating the Tensions between Organizations and the Public* book

PRESENTATION #2 topic: *Effective Crisis Communication: Moving From Crisis to Opportunity* book

PRESENTATION #3 topic: *Applied Crisis Communication & Crisis Management* book

2. Presentation #4/Crisis Analysis. Each group will prepare a 45-minute presentation and present an outline. Groups should post outlines to Blackboard 24 hours prior to in-class presentation and should bring a hard copy of the outline to class for instructor. Presentations should include:

- Identify a theoretical insight that will be applied to a crisis example chosen by the group.
- Vet the theoretical insight and scholars referenced within the field of Crisis Management.
- Announce the major questions/issues/metaphors that the scholar addresses.
- Situate the crisis within its historical moment.
- Present a major crisis that has effected an organization or organizations. Examples include:
 - BP Oil Spill
 - Housing Bubble
 - VW emission scandal
 - Cyberhacking at Target
- Tell the story of the crisis.
- Educate the class on the nature of the crisis before applying the theoretical material. Be certain that the class understands the character and implications of the crisis.
- Consider how the crisis could be analyzed according to the theories and frameworks set forth by the select scholar.
- Offer crisis management implications.

3. Final: Scholarly Paper. Papers should be approximately 25 pages of text, cite 20-30 sources, and address one crisis in depth. NOTE: Please discuss your crisis event choice with Dr. Arnett, in person, before or after class. The final paper is worth 50% of the course grade.

For this assignment, students should consider:

- A description of the crisis event.
- The historical moment in which the crisis occurred.
- The definition of crisis communication for this particular event.
- The documented public response to the crisis.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:

| WEEK | Assignment |
|-------------|--|
| 1 | Syllabus |
| 2 | PRESENTATION 1: Groups 1 & 2 |
| 3 | Paper Topics Discussion PRESENTATION 1: Group 3 |
| 4 | PRESENTATION 1: Group 4 Arnett Lecture |
| 5 | PRESENTATION 2: Groups 1 & 2 |
| 6 | PRESENTATION 2: Groups 3 & 4 |
| 7 | PRESENTATION 3: Groups 1 & 2 |
| 8 | PRESENTATION 3: Groups 3 & 4; |
| 9 | PRESENTATION 4: Groups 1 & 2 |
| 10 | PRESENTATION 4: Groups 3 & 4 |
| 11 | FINAL PAPER DUE |