

COMM 444901

**Crisis Communication 3 Credits;  
Summer, 2019**

**Boston College Summer Session**

**Summer 2019 Semester, June 24-July 31, 2019 Class**

**Meeting Day and Time: M/W 6:00-9:15 p.m.**

Instructor: Dr. Donald Fishman  
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Office Hours: M/W 5:30-6:00 p.m. and by appointment

### **Boston College Mission Statement**

Strengthened by more than a century and a half of dedication to academic excellence, Boston College commits itself to the highest standards of teaching and research in undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs and to the pursuit of a just society through its own accomplishments, the work of its faculty and staff, and the achievements of its graduates. It seeks both to advance its place among the nation's finest universities and to bring to the company of its distinguished peers and to contemporary society the richness of the Catholic intellectual idea of a mutually illuminating relationship between religious faith and free intellectual inquiry.

Boston College draws inspiration for its academic societal mission from its distinctive religious tradition. As a Catholic and Jesuit university, it is rooted in a worldview that encounters God in all creation and through all human activity, especially in the search for truth in every discipline, in the desire to learn, and in the call to live justly together. In this spirit, the University regards the contribution of different religious traditions and value systems as essential to the fullness of its intellectual life and to the continuous development of its distinctive intellectual heritage.

### **Course Description**

This course is designed to examine events and situations that actually or potentially threaten the viability of an organization. Attention is devoted to developing an effective crisis communication plan, speaking simultaneously to multiple stakeholders, decision-making under pressure, and resolving--rather than litigating--organizational problems. This course relies heavily on the case study method. Among the case studies examined are the Tylenol product tampering incident, the Exxon *Valdez* accident, the 2010 British Petroleum Oil spill, the Union Carbide Bhopal gas leak, the *Challenger* Space Shuttle disaster, the Texaco racial slurs crisis, school violence at Columbine High School, the recovery efforts during Hurricane Katrina, the 2011 earthquake in Japan, the 2012 school shootings in Newtown, CT and the 2017 United Airlines overbooking fiasco. This course fulfills the

requirements for a writing-intensive seminar in the Department of Communication at Boston College

### **TEXTBOOK AND REQUIRED READING**

Each student should have a copy of the following coursepack: Donald Fishman, *Crisis Communication* (Chestnut Hill, MA, BC Press, 2019). In addition, there may be a series of reading--as needed--placed on Canvas. Readings should be completed on or before the dates listed, and students should be prepared to discuss intelligently the materials they have read. In addition, a copy of the coursepack has been placed on reserve at O'Neill Library.

### **CANVAS**

Canvas is the Learning Management System (LMS) at Boston College, designed to help faculty and students share ideas, collaborate on assignments, discuss course readings and materials, submit assignments, and much more--all online. As a Boston College student, you should familiarize yourself with this important tool.

### **COURSE OBJECTIVE**

1. Students will develop an understanding of the role of an image and the personality of a company during a crisis situation.
2. Students will be able to identify natural history theories, strategies-based theories, and miscellaneous theoretical approaches to crisis management.
3. Students will be to utilize theories of mass communication and social media to explain the ever-expanding role of media in influencing public policy.
4. Students will be able to communicate effectively, orally and in writing.

### **COMPUTUATION OF THE COURSE GRADE**

The approximate breakdown of points awarded during the course is as follows: Midterm Examination, forty percent; Research Paper, forty percent; Evidence Kit, ten percent; and Class Participation, ten percent. Excessive absences during the semester will be cause for automatically lowering the final grade.

The undergraduate grading system is as follows: A (4.00), A- (3.67)  
 B+ (3.33), B (3.00) B- (2.67)  
 C+ (2.33), C (2.00), C- (1.67)  
 D+ (1.33). D (1.00), D- (.67)  
 F (.00)

All students can access final grades through Agora after the grading deadline each semester. Student who complete course evaluations can access grades earlier, as they are posted

### **Deadlines and Late Work**

All work must be done on time to receive full credit. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period on the specified dates. Late assignments will be graded accordingly.

### **Course Assignments**

It is expected that you will spend six (6) hours per week on out-of-class assignments and exercises. These are listed below. Please note that some weeks require more time and some weeks require less time, but the average is approximately six (6) hours per week over the semester.

### **Course Schedule**

Please bring your coursepack to class each time: Donald Fishman, *Readings in Crisis Communication* (BC Press, 2019).

June 24:	Introduction to Crisis Communication (No Reading Due)
	•In Class Discussion of the GEICO Case (Instructor Handout)
June 26:	Fishman/Berg & Robb, "Crisis Management and the Paradigm Case," 59-75
	Fishman/ten Berge, "The Tylenol Poisonings," 77-91
July 1:	Fishman/William J. Small, "Exxon Valdez, How to Spend Billions and Still Get a Black Eye," 103-119
	Discussion of the 2010 British Petroleum Oil Spill
July 3:	Penn State University Football Scandal and Crisis Management in Higher Education
	<i>No Reading Due</i>

- July 8: Fishman/Fink & Meyers,"  
Stage Analysis," 147-155
- Fishman/Benoit, "Image Restoration  
Theory" (Strategies Theory), 157-166
- Fishman/Birkland, 179-184
- Fishman/Downs, Issue-Attention Cycle,  
219-231  
*Distribute Prep Sheet for Midterm  
Examination;*
- July 10: Fishman/Technological Disasters,  
Lerbinger, 275-295
- Fishman/Natural Disasters,  
Lerbinger 323-355
- Fishman/Sobel & Lesson (On FEMA),  
363-381
- Fishman/Lotke & Borosage (On FEMA),  
383-394
- Discuss Evidence Kit*
- July 15: Fishman/Apologies, Tyler 143-165
- Fishman/Benoit, 413-429
- Discuss Evidence Kit again*
- July 17: **Midterm Examination**
- Special in-Class Prep Session for the  
examination from 6:30-7:00 p.m. Midterm  
Exam starts at 7:00 p.m. and goes to 9:00  
p.m.

- July 21: *Sunday Supplement Class:*  
Prep Session on the Evidence Kit--4:00-5:00 p.m. Attendance is voluntary and optional
- July 22: **Evidence Kit is Due**  
**Guidelines on how to Write the Research Paper; footnote exercise in-class**
- July 24: No Class: Instructor at Jesuit Conference in Los Angeles: Evidence Kit is Returned
- July 29: Writing Workshop. Organizing the Research Paper; Continued Discussion of the Style Sheet  
  
Read Sample Paper, 509-528.
- July 31: Research Papers are Due: Submit two copies of your research paper. Follow the Style Sheet guidelines discussed in class; see page 507 in the coursepack for grading rubric.  
  
Students who want their papers returned should leave a stamped, self-addressed envelope, and I will mail the papers back to you as soon as possible.

### **Written Work**

Each student will submit a twenty to twenty-five page research paper analyzing some aspect of crisis communication. The paper may focus on a case study of a particular incident, or it may examine a major concept in crisis communication, such as the role of a CEO or a whistleblower. The research paper should reflect the following six criteria: (1) Use of APA in-text reference notes; (2) A minimum of twenty-five references in the text; (3) A minimum of one-fourth of the sources should be library or Internet sources; the other three-fourths will be the opposite of whatever decision

you make about the original one-fourth; (4) A minimum of eleven different sources; and (5) Effective use of the writing criteria discussed in class and included in the coursepack. Reading assignments during the semester will provide examples of well-designed and thoughtful case studies, such as the Berg and Robb article on Tylenol. Other assigned readings will serve as a source of ideas for possible paper topics. A more detailed discussion of the research paper will occur during the class lectures on research that focus upon data collection, research design, and the actual writing of the paper. There are sample research papers in the coursepack.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Class attendance is an important component of learning. Students are expected to attend all class sessions. When an occasion occurs that prevents a student from attending class, the student is responsible for contacting the instructor before the class meets. Students who miss class are still expected to complete all assignments and meet all deadlines. Many instructors grade for participation; if you miss class, you cannot make up participation points associated with that class. Makeup work may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor. If circumstances necessitate excessive absence from class, the student should consider withdrawing from the class. Four or more absences during the semester will drop your average one letter grade on the final grade.

Consistent with BC's commitment to creating a learning environment that is respectful of different backgrounds, we believe that every reasonable effort should be made to allow members of the university community to observe their religious holidays without jeopardizing their academic status. Students are responsible for reviewing course syllabi as soon as possible, and for communicating with the instructor promptly regarding any possible conflicts with observed religious holidays. Students are responsible for completing all class requirements for days missed due to conflicts with religious holidays.

### **ACCOMODATION AND ACCESSIBILITY**

Boston College is committed to providing accommodations to students, faculty, staff and visitors with disabilities. Specific documentation from the appropriate office is required for students seeking accommodation in Woods College courses. Advanced notice and formal registration with the appropriate office is required to facilitate this process. There are two separate offices at BC that coordinate services for students with disabilities.

- The Connors Family Learning Center (CFLC) coordinates services for students with LD and ADHD
- The Disabilities Service Office (DSO) coordinates services with other disabilities.

Find out more about BC's commitment to accessibility at

[www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility](http://www.bc.edu/sites/accessibility).

### **SCHOLARSHIP AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Students in Woods College courses must produce original work and cite references appropriately. Failure to cite references is plagiarism. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not necessarily limited to, plagiarism, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, cheating on exams or assignments, or submitting the same material or substantially similar materials to meet the requirements of more than one course without seeking permission of all instructors concerned. Scholastic misconduct may also involve, but is not necessarily limited to, acts that violate the rights of other students, such as depriving another student of course materials or interfering with another student's work. Please see the Boston College policy on academic integrity for more information.