

## COM 478 Seminar in Public Relations

School of Communication

Illinois State University

Spring 2024

Tuesday and Thursdays, 5-6:15pm

**Professor:** Rebecca (Becky) Hayes, Ph.D.

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### Office Hours:

Tuesdays, 11am – 12pm; Thursdays 2:30-4:30pm, either in person or via Zoom (email to ask) and by appointment if you can't make those times

### **Catalog Description**

Advanced examination of selected areas of theory and research in public relations and recent developments in the public relations profession. Prerequisite: Consent of instructor. May be repeated if content different.

### **Spring 2024 Focus**

This course is focused on the real-world analysis of public relations through the use of academic research, industry publications, and industry and student-developed case studies. This semester's focus will be on crisis communication, one of the fastest growing sub-disciplines of public relations both in academic study and in industry. First focused generally to provide a grounding in industry and academic public relations, then moving to crisis communication and specifically the study of and theory regarding responses to crises and other organizational disruptions. We will examine the implications of good and bad crisis communication for public relations practitioners, journalists, bloggers, and organizations, and what all of it means for crisis communication theory.

### **Course Organization**

Since this is a twice a week class\*, we will be more content-focused on Tuesdays, and more discussion-focused on Thursdays, and reading assignments will follow that organization, with foundational knowledge presented on Tuesday and then applied or discussed on Thursdays.

*\*this is the first time 478 has run as a twice a week class, so if things aren't working, we'll switch things up!*

### **Course Texts**

#### **Textbook:**

**Books:** 1. *Risk and Crisis Communication: Communicating in a Disruptive Age* by Lachlan, Spence, Liberman, and Avtgis ("RCC" on schedule) 2. [\*The Handbook of Crisis Communication\*](#), edited by W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay. ("HCC" on schedule). Available as an E-book from Milner, and we probably won't run out of "opens". We are only using this for three chapters, so the ebook is sufficient.

**Journal articles:** Other academic readings will be available via Canvas in modules for each week. It is your job to keep up on the articles posted, but email me if you think something is missing!

**Industry publications & podcasts:** Ragan's PR Daily (<http://www.prdaily.com>) and their section on crisis com, and *PRNews*, one of the top industry publications. These might not be included on the syllabus, but if they are in the module for that week, they are required reading. We also will be listening to the Spin Sucks and Ethical Voices podcasts.

**APA 7<sup>th</sup> Edition:** And, as with nearly all of your graduate classes, a 7<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* is also required for formatting papers.

### **Class Polices**

Don't be late. Don't be rude. Do the reading. Act like a graduate student, not an undergrad. I don't take attendance, but I expect you to be there, and participation points depend on participation, which obviously requires attendance. Most importantly, be awesome.

### **Class Communication**

All class announcements made outside of class time will be made via Canvas and/or the your ILSTU email. You must check in to both frequently as I will assume you have received all messages.

### **Course Grading and Assignments**

*Late work.* All assignments for this course must be turned in at the beginning of the class for which they are assigned, or as indicated at the top of the assignment sheet. Late work will be penalized with a 15% point reduction *for each* 24 hours the assignment is late. The exceptions are the teaching/presentation day and the final case study presentation, those can't be late.

*Critiques of Work* It is my job to provide honest assessment of your work, and I tend to be pretty direct in feedback. Never take this personally – I am just trying to help you make your work the best it can be and also the best reflection of is expected in graduate school.

*Plagiarism* will result in loss of points on a particular part of an assignment, failure on that assignment, or failure in the class, depending on the severity. Please see the end of the syllabus for more, including AI/Chat GPT policies. If you are part of a team and you plagiarize without their knowledge but imperiling *their* grade, you will fail the project.

*Teamwork.* If you are not contributing to a team you have chosen to work with or been assigned to, you will have to meet with me about bringing up your contribution and/or developing a project on your own (i.e., you might be removed from the team). Teams need to tell me if there is a problem EARLY because I cannot do much if a problem is brought to my attention right before a due date. Try to deal with issues yourself first, and if the situation does not improve, tell me asap.

*All work.* All assignments are expected to be written to the highest standards of collegiate writing and are expected to conform to APA 7<sup>th</sup> edition formatting. Proper in-text citations are a requirement. Typos, serious grammatical errors, and significant formatting problems will be penalized. Work turned in in other classes that is submitted for this class, without prior discussion, will be result in failure (i.e., no double-dipping without permission). *I will stop reading seriously flawed work and will return it to you ungraded.*

*Assignments/Graded Elements.*

- **Discussion Questions:** On most Thursdays, you will have discussion questions or thoughts due by noon (to give me time to organize them). Class discussion will include those questions. Ten points per week, starting the second week, and you can miss one with no penalty.

- **Content Presentations:**
  - **Real-world case study presentation, paper, and discussion:** With one or two partners, you will present a case study of a brand or non-profit's campaign, including a social media audit. 150 points for the paper, 50 points for the presentation and discussion.
  - **Student choice article or topic presentation:** Starting a few weeks into the term, one or two students each day will first find and then present an important article or topic/theory from their chosen area, of (mostly) their choice. You will need to do research and submit options to Becky by February 2, and then the week you will present will be assigned to you. 100 points for presentation, 25 points for the options you submit.
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- **Quiz:** There will be one quiz over basic crisis content knowledge.
- **Participation:** This is a class that depends on informed participation and reading by everyone. In addition to expected informed discussion, participation, and attendance. I realize everyone has an off week, but active (but informed) engagement will be expected, and rewarded. 100 points.
- **Final project:** There are three options, all of which can be done either individually or in teams of up to 3 total people. 1. Development of a crisis communication plan for a real client (your job to secure one in consultation with me) 2. An additional case study on an evolving/very recent crisis 3. A literature review or research proposal on a crisis communication topic of interest to you (this would be a great start for a 39h, btw).

Points breakdown:

Assignments	Available Points	Earned Points
Quiz	50	
Discussion Questions*	90*	
Case Paper	150	
Case Presentation	50	
Article Options	25	
Article/Topic Presentation	100	
Participation	100	
Final Project	200	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>640*</b>	
<i>Extra credit (up to 15 points)</i>		

*\*Total number of discussion question assignments might vary depending on new readings, so total points available might flex 10 or 20 points.*

Assignment grades will be posted in the Canvas gradebook, please keep track of them there. If you disagree with my evaluation of your work, it is clear that I have mis-graded something, please see me during office hours *within one week* after I have returned your work. I will not discuss grades at any other time. I follow conventional rounding up procedures (see scale, below)

#### *Rounding*

I do not "round up" or "round down" points toward final course grades, except in cases for fractions of percentages, and at that rate I use conventional rounding procedures, e.g. 71.75% would be rounded to a C, and those rounding procedures are actually reflected in the grading scale below. **No** exceptions.

All Students (please note this might be different than your other classes):

A=91.5%-100%	B=82%-91.49%	C=71.5%-81.49%	D=60%-71.49%	F=0-60%
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Incompletes will be granted only when a documented emergency prevents you from completing the class, you contacted the Dean of Students Office, and you have completed at least approximately two-thirds (66%) of the course.

### **Schedule, *Subject to Change***

**There will also be pertinent industry readings not listed here-check the Canvas Module for the week.**

**Schedule and readings subject to change – student articles to be added later**

<b>Week 1 Jan 16/18</b>	<b>Foundational Knowledge: Crisis Management and Communication</b>	<b>See Canvas Modules for a breakdown of what we will be covering Tu/Thu</b>
	Topics: Overview of the course; Understanding PR, crisis communication, and how it all works together.	Read: Coombs (2010) 17-22
<b>Week 2 Jan 23/25</b>	<b>Foundational Knowledge: Crisis, risk, and reputation</b>	
	Topics: Crisis management leading to crisis communication; Crisis stages; reputation Assigned: Article presentations	Read: Coombs (2010); Griffin (2010); additional reputation reading
<b>Week 3 Jan 30/Feb 1</b>	<b>Crisis stages, PR, and Audiences</b>	
	Topics: Big picture and best practices in crisis com. PR messages and audiences. Case study method  Assigned: Case Study Assignment	Read: RCC Chapter 12; Veil et al (2020) Case study method resources <b>Due: Article options</b>
<b>Week 4 Feb 6/8</b>	<b>Introducing Risk and Differentiating from Crisis</b>	
	Topics: Paracrises and incidents, prevention	Read: RCC Chapters 1&2; Coombs & Holliday (2012); parts of Hayes & Smudde (2017)
<b>Week 5 Feb 13/15</b>	<b>Back to Crisis Communication: Theories and Practice</b>	
	Topics: SCCT and Socially Mediated SCCT	Read: RCC Chapter 3 & 5; Coombs 2023 & Austin & Liu 2023; <b>student articles start</b>

<b>Week 6</b> <b>Feb 20/22</b>	<b>Organizational Experiences &amp; Crises</b>	
	Topics: Short cases in org crisis	Read: <i>RCC</i> Chapter 4, student articles and others
<b>Week 7</b> <b>Feb 27/29</b>	<b>Tuesday: TBA, Thursday: Case study work time and check ins</b>	
	Tuesday we will likely have some catch-up content, but the rest of the time we'll to meet with our teams and do check-ins with me in anticipation of the next week's due date	Read: TBA but likely not much <b>QUIZ</b>
<b>Week 8</b> <b>Mar 5/7</b>	<b>Case study presentations!</b>	
	Topics: Just presentations	Read: No readings <b>Due: Case studies and presentations</b>
<b>Week 9</b> <b>Mar 12/14</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
<b>Week 10</b> <b>Mar 19/21</b>	<b>Corporate Social Responsibility &amp; Risk Management</b>	
	Topics: CSR, cultural norms, risk messaging  Assigned: Final project	Read: <i>RCC</i> Chapter 6; Mehta et al 2021
<b>Week 11</b> <b>Mar 26/28</b>	<b>International Crisis and Risk</b>	
	Topics: Global concerns, International applications, etc	Read: <i>RCC</i> Chapter 8, Coombs OCC (2023)
<b>Week 12</b> <b>Apr 2/4</b>	<b>Work Week for Final Projects - CSCA</b>	
	Tuesday we will have check ins on the final project, Thursday is cancelled for CSCA travel, but for those traveling I will have some suggested panels to attend	Read: No readings
<b>Week 13</b> <b>Apr 9/11</b>	<b>Messaging – Internal, External, and Perceptions</b>	

	Topics: Understanding relationships between sources, message, and receiver and how status and perceptions influence message reception	Read: <i>RCC</i> Chapters 9, 10, & 11
<b>Week 14</b> <b>Apr 16/18</b>	<b>Role of External Sources of Information</b>	
	Topics: Influencers, activist publics, news media	
<b>Week 15</b> <b>Apr 23/25</b>	<b>TBD! Let's see what we're interested in</b>	
<b>Week 16</b> <b>Apr 30/May 2</b>	<b>Final Project presentations</b>	
	Final project presentations	
<b>Week 17</b> <b>Finals Week</b>	<b>Final exam day TBD, final project (the written part) will be due that day.</b>	<b>Due: final campaign projects (the written part)</b>

## Course Policies

You also are expected to be familiar with [ISU's Code of Student Conduct](#).

### Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism and any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating and plagiarism (presenting someone else's work as your own or without proper acknowledgment) or any other type of academic dishonesty will be considered justification for failure for that particular assignment or the entire course, depending on severity.) Although you may discuss with each other any assignment and course material, bounce ideas off each other, and share the university's resources available to you (e.g., media guides), you cannot share actual work you do with others. All work must be that of the student (or students involved in a group assignment) and developed during the current semester for *this* course. Sources must receive credit using APA style. For information regarding academic integrity and procedures for academic misconduct, see ISU's [Code of Student Conduct, Section V.B.1](#). You will be reported for academic misconduct if you engage in it.

TL;DR: DO NOT REPURPOSE (i.e., copy and paste) other's words as your own! Doing so will result in failure of the assignment, and maybe the class, depending on severity. When in doubt, quote per APA style (totally cool as long as there isn't too much of it), reword and cite per APA style, or ask me, I'm always happy to help!

Anytime you use someone else's exact words, without APA quote style, is plagiarism. Really the only reason to use exact words is when the person's words/phrasing have significant impact, or there really is no way to effectively reword.

Reminder, in-text citations look like this (Hayes, 2015), not "According to the article written by Hayes..."

### **AI/ChatGPT/Grammarly**

Please note I am 100% fine with *some* use of any of these, I use them, too! BUT, *extensive* use of AI is not cool and is considered plagiarism. I do use detectors, and will talk to you if it looks like you are using AI extensively. Save drafts to protect yourself. If you are clearly using it to get ideas, help with structure and editing, that's fine, but using it to do the writing and summarizing (summarizing is where I see misuse the most!) is considered extensive. If you do not have an earlier draft that can show that you've done the work, I will probably have a problem with it that will result in a loss of points or a referral to Student Conduct.

Grammarly is great, but the detection systems for AI frequently indicate that it is AI. Again, save drafts so you can show your work!

### **Attendance**

I don't take attendance, but there are points for participation, and if you aren't there, you can't participate, obviously. Missing one class is not a big deal, missing more than that will probably start to hurt your participation grade a bit (and don't forget discussion questions will still be due).

The exception to this is illness – if you are sick, don't come to class! We can try Zoom you in depending on how you're feeling and will work around any participation issues.

### **Assignment Feedback**

I give pretty direct feedback and edits – the goal is to fix problems before they are bigger problems in your campaign or for you professionally. Please don't take criticism personally, I am just trying to help you learn how to be the best PR person/writer.

On longer papers, I will give my focused comments on the first couple pages because after that the errors/problems are repetitive. I may note other things in later pages, but a lack of comments is not necessarily an indication of correctness or effectiveness. I also won't find absolutely everything because I am trying to get work back to you quickly. Of course, if you want more detailed help, visit with me.

### **Late work and Missed work**

All assignments are due no later than the time stated on the assignment. If in class, that means within the first five minutes of class. Anything received after the due time will be penalized 10% for each 24 hours it is late, starting after submission (so 10% off for an hour late, 20% off for 25 hours late). Talk to me if you have something significant going on – we can probably work around it. All assignments will come in via RN, with few exceptions. You can totally turn work in early—especially if you are going to be absent the day something is due.

## **Extra Credit**

### **Research Participation - Extra Credit**

There will be a few extra credit opportunities for research participation. The extra credit points will be added to your final grade, and may not necessarily appear in the gradebook immediately upon your completion of the opportunity – I don't get the lists until after a study ends. There are no guarantees for extra credit, and it is each student's responsibility to be aware of and take advantage of such opportunities. You may receive extra credit for participating in any of the studies posted to the School of Communication's Research Announcement Board. The Research Announcement Board is updated as research studies are opened/closed, and it is your responsibility to access the Board and be aware of available opportunities. The Research Announcement Board can be accessed via:

<https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies>

In general, each 30 minutes of participation in an extra credit study will earn you .5 Research Credits, which translates into 2.5 points in this class. You may earn a total of 15 points participating in research (so, that means roughly four online surveys, or two bigger things like in-person focus groups or experiments). Please see the call for participants for the Research Credits associated with each study. Each Research project listed on the Research Announcement Board will indicate the specific number of Research Credits associated with the project. The course instructor will get evidence of participation and the time of participation from the researcher(s) who administer the research studies at the conclusion of the semester; however, it is your responsibility to make sure that the researchers have the necessary evidence of your participation at the time of the study. Before participating in a study, please be sure to have your name, ULID (i.e., the part of your email before @ilstu.edu), instructor name, and course and section number ready, as you will need to provide these to receive credit. Research Credit can only be applied to one course for each study, unless specified otherwise on the Research Announcement Board. A maximum of 10 points can be earned from extra credit opportunities via the Research Announcement Board unless some special exception is given by Dr. Hayes. After the last day of class there will be no more opportunities for extra credit, don't ask ;)

### **Non-Research Extra Credit Opportunities (Instructor Determined)**

There may be some studies for which you are not eligible (e.g., recruiting based on gender or family structure) or in which you do not wish to take part. Reasonable alternatives are available for those not able or wanting to take part in specific studies, to ensure equitable non-research based opportunities. Throughout the semester, the instructor will announce non-research opportunities for extra credit, which may include attending a colloquium, reading a recent article or research paper, or attending an on-campus event and writing a summary of the connection of the event to course content. The instructor will make these opportunities and specific details available as they arise.

### **Non-Research Extra Credit Opportunities (SoC Alternative)**

There may be some studies for which you are not eligible (e.g., recruiting based on gender or family structure) or in which you do not wish to take part. Reasonable alternatives are available for those not able or wanting to take part in specific studies, to ensure equitable non-research based opportunities. For each available study in which you would like to complete an alternate assignment, please contact the instructor, who will assign a journal from which to identify and provide an annotated bibliography to the researcher consistent with the description on the Alternate Opportunities page (<https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies/home/students/alternates>) of the Board. You must complete and submit the research report to the researcher before the date the study closes--late submissions are not



accepted. Alternate opportunities will be scaled by the course instructor to ensure commensurate time commitment and course credit with the research-based opportunity.

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