

New York City College of Technology
Humanities Department
Course Title: COM 3404 Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication
Hours and Credits for Lecture/lab: 3 credits (3 hours)
Course Pre-requisite: COM 1332 or COM 1403 or higher, or department permission.

Course/Catalog Description

Effective communication is critical in the event of a crisis, because the situation is evolving and the public need for information is high. This course focuses on communication during emergencies, such as environmental disasters, mass shootings, disease outbreaks, food and drug safety incidents, etc. Students learn core principles in Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication. Global case studies illustrate best practices and pitfalls, as students prepare for the challenges of communicating in a variety of scenarios, across numerous channels, with diverse target audiences.

Tech Requirements

The minimum technological requirements for fully online sections of this course are a working camera and microphone. Students are expected to turn on cameras and microphones at their instructor's request.

Introduction

Poverty, climate change, population growth, political instability—such changes wrought by globalization increase the odds of disasters and the demand for trained emergency responders. Communication is vital for emergency response, whether from pandemics, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes or mass shooting events.

Governments, cities, communities, organizations and families to need plan ahead before the event. Without a communication strategy in place, responders lack the capacity to effectively respond. This course will help to prepare students to plan, implement and evaluate risk and emergency communication. The curriculum is based on the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) principles, which are used for effective response to crises, disasters and emergencies.

Textbook

[CDC's Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication \(CERC\) manual](#)

A free, online resource from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Other required reading materials, podcasts and videos posted on the Blackboard site by instructor and students.

Suggested Reading

Haddow, G. and Haddow, K.S. (2014). *Disaster Communications in a Changing Media World*. ISBN-13: 978-0124078680

Intended Course Learning Outcomes

- Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.
- Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.
- Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.
- Identify events/ trends happening globally and their potential threat to public health.
- Explain Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) principles.
- Describe typical reactions to a crisis/disaster and the type of messages each audience needs.

- Determine how to tailor messages for diverse populations.
- Explain the role of media in public health emergencies using media monitoring and metrics.
- Understand the function of spokespersons and information officers.
- Identify ways to develop relationships with stakeholders and partners.

ASSIGNMENTS

Full descriptions and instructions for assignments are found on Blackboard. Please review these well in advance of assignment due dates so you can have your questions about assignments answered in class. For all assignments, follow the instructions carefully and closely to ensure successful completion.

Simulated Crisis Response

In this activity, two cards are drawn from different decks, naming a hypothetical event that represents a dangerous situation. Once the event is chosen, each student receives a name badge with the title of some stakeholder affected by the crisis. Instructions inside each badge explain who the student is supposed to meet with and what task they need to complete. After 30 minutes, a mock press conference is held. Those in leadership roles give statements about the event according to CERC principles. Some members of the audience play adversarial roles. This fun and educational activity simulates decision-making under conditions of uncertainty amidst time constraints.

Media Monitoring Reports

Each student produces two short “case studies” of the news media surrounding a current or historical event. These papers use media monitoring techniques to investigate communication issues, and follow a problem/solution organizational pattern. Narrative elements and frames are identified, and solutions are proposed. Each report is two to three pages and contains three citations. Please closely follow template provided. Key findings are informally presented and discussed in class.

Discussion Board Forums

There are 10 Discussion Board Forums to complete. Each “Forum” contains a prompt from the instructor. Each student posts 250 word “thread” (with correct spelling and grammar) per Forum, with question at the end for readers to spark discussion. When finished posting thread, student reads other threads in the Forum, and responds to at least three (for each Forum). At least three sentences, per response, required. Discussion Board is “asynchronous,” meaning, student can log in, post and reply at any time of the day or night. Please note the due dates for each.

Final Projects (includes draft manuscript, revised manuscript, slides and oral presentation)

Each student produces a detailed manuscript and slide presentation, which goes through multiple revisions. Manuscript and slide show are due mid semester. Instructor makes comments and specifies corrections needed. Student makes corrections and revises according to the instructor’s comments, then resubmits. A manuscript draft marked “complete” is required for the speaker to present. Students present extemporaneously, in a carefully planned, rehearsed speech, in the last few weeks of the semester.

Choose ONE of the following Final Project options:

- 1) Communication Surveillance Report (CSR): This is similar to the Media Monitoring Report but goes into more detail to portray the communication environment surrounding an emergency or other public health issue. CSRs help incident commanders understand public response to

an event. The CSR author presents metrics about news stories, searches, and social media mentions, highlighting words and themes. Report should be closely modelled after sample CSR provided. For presentation, findings are presented in charts and graphs. At the end of presentation, student poses three questions for class discussion.

- 2) Apply the CERC Principles: This is similar to the above in that you expand in greater detail on one of the events profiled in s Media Monitoring Report, focusing on how public health and other officials did or did not adhere to CERC Principles. Closely following sample provided, student presents statements, social media posts, press briefings, or official press releases, and revises them according to CERC. Your presentation should include a summary of the key issues, perspectives and participants, and a critique or evaluative response. At the end of presentation, student poses three questions for class discussion.
- 3) Design an Emergency Response Plan: This assignment gives you the chance carefully plan for an emergency for an organization or community. Students address risks to health and safety using the OSHA Emergency Action Plan [checklist](#) and other resources. Closely follow sample ERP provided to anticipate and address other contingencies in the event of a disaster or emergency. At the end of presentation, student poses three questions for class discussion.

For each of the above, a manuscript, slide show and oral presentation are required. See “Final Project Requirements” on page 5 of this course outline, below. *

Peer Evaluations

After Final Project Oral Presentations, students assess one another’s speech by filling out a peer evaluation form. Evaluators consider the speaker’s content, delivery, and visual aids. Details about the speech are required, showing that evaluator listened closely, as well as constructive criticism that may help the speaker improve.

Participation and Professionalism

A significant portion of student grade depends on active participation and how each student conducts themselves during class. Classroom participation consists of the following components: (a) active and timely participation during virtual or in-person class discussions (b) active and timely participation during virtual or in-person group work or peer feedback (c) punctual submission of graded assignments (d) the quality of student written and spoken assignments (e) the quality of online self-presentation including appropriate attire, seating, lighting, and background (f) overall classroom interactions and communication ethics. Student participation grade depends on student presence and engagement with discussions and activities taking place during class.

Grading

Simulated Crisis Response	10%
Media Monitoring Reports	10% each = 20%
Discussion Board Forums	

10

% FINAL PROJECTS

- Manuscript (DRAFT) 10%
- Manuscript (REVISED) 10%
- Slides 10%
- Oral Presentation

10% Peer Evaluations	
10%	
Participation and Professionalism	10%
Total	100%

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week	Topic	Assignments Due	Reading
1	Syllabus and Assignments	Read syllabus & complete quiz	CERC Introduction
2	Emergency Communication	Discussion Board Forum 1	Psychology of a Crisis
3	Communication Environment	Discussion Board Forum 2	Messages & Audiences
4	Media Monitoring	Discussion Board Forum 3	Community Engagement
5	Crisis Communication Planning	Discussion Board Forum 4	Crisis Communication Plans
Week	Topic	Assignments Due	Reading
6	Incident command	1 st Media Monitoring Report	Spokesperson
7	Simulated Crisis Response	Manuscript (DRAFT) & Slides	Working With the Media
8	Working with Media	2 nd Media Monitoring Report	Other Comm Channels
9	Politics of Disaster	Discussion Board Forum 5	Social Media & Mobile
10	Channels and modes	Discussion Board Forum 6	Terrorism and Bioterrorism
11	Selected topics	Discussion Board Forum 7	Human Resources
12	Oral Presentation Workshops	REVISED manuscript & slides	Partnerships
13	Final Project Oral Presentations	Peer Evaluations due	
14	Final Project Oral Presentations	Peer Evaluations due	
15	Final Project Oral Presentations	Peer Evaluations due	

CLASS POLICIES AND SUPPORT SERVICES

HUMANITIES DEPARTMENT ATTENDANCE POLICY

It is the conviction of the Humanities department that a student who is not in a class for any reason is not receiving the benefit of the education being provided. Missed class time includes not just absences but also latenesses, early departures, and time outside the classroom taken by students during class meeting periods. Missed time impacts any portion of the final grade overtly allocated to participation and/or any grades awarded for activities that relate to presence in class. Note: Each professor will keep accurate, detailed records of students' attendance.

School of Arts and Sciences Attendance Statement

When students miss class, they do not receive the full benefit of their education. Missing class includes absence, lateness, early departure and stepping out for prolonged periods during the session. Students must attend class consistently and on time: Failure to do so will negatively affect the final grade and could lead to an 'F' in the course.

Academic Integrity at City Tech

"Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models

of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion.” (NYCCT Academic Integrity Policy).

Reasonable Accommodation

The Humanities Department is committed to providing reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities. Any student who has a disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact me personally so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to maximize educational opportunities. For more information, contact the Center for Student Accessibility in N108, or call the Program Manager John Reid Currie at (718)260-5143

Humanities Department Commitment to Student Diversity

The Humanities Department complies with the college wide nondiscrimination policy and seeks to foster a safe and inclusive learning environment that celebrates diversity in its many forms and enhances our students’ ability to be informed, global citizens. Through our example, we demonstrate an appreciation of the rich diversity of world cultures and the unique forms of expression that make us human.

Communication Discipline-Specific Policies & Guidelines for Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)

Analytical and critical thinking skills are part of the learning outcomes of this course and the Communication discipline; therefore, all written and oral assignments must be prepared by the student. The instructor may allow for the limited use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI). Students will learn both when and how these tools may be used, and when and how to provide attribution. Generative AI can produce inaccurate or biased information, based on limited knowledge or citing fake references, and resulting in copyright and confidentiality infringement. Therefore, you will be held accountable for work that includes

- Incorrect, fake, and fabricated sources, or information misattributed to sources
- AI-generated work presented as original work (including essays, research papers, speech outlines, discussion boards, PowerPoints, etc.)
- Any AI generated text copied/pasted without attribution.
- Assessments, quizzes, and exams completed using AI
- AI generated imagery or multimedia without acknowledgement and citation of AI platform as creator
- AI-generated misinformation, including incorrect, biased, misinformed, or misleading claims

Any use of generative AI tools as described above will be treated as academic dishonesty and/or plagiarism and will be reported to the College Academic Integrity Committee. While understanding *how* and *when* to use generative AI tools may be emerging as a professional job skill, ethics still matter and being careful not to spread misinformation is foremost. Developing strong ethics and a sense of responsibility in this area will prepare you for graduation and a competitive workplace. If you allow AI to think for you, then you may not be able to do the kind of thinking that leads to success.

***Final Project Requirements**

Manuscript Requirements

- Typed, Microsoft Word document (.docx), about 3 pages including *References*.

- Contains complete transcript of 8 to 10-minute presentation (word for word).
- Must be entirely original work. Absolutely no copy/pasted text allowed.
- Topic must be specific. Not too general. Must go beyond obvious, common knowledge.
- Includes notations about what visual aids are being shown in each part.
- 3 to 5 sources ONLY, cited in three places: In-text, aloud and in the References section
 - Includes wording to show student will say sources of information aloud (“according to...”)
- Includes all required components and sub-components of template provided, including:
 - *Introduction* with attention getter, statement of topic, purpose and thesis, statement of credibility/relevance, preview (one sentence, each).
 - *Body* with 3 discrete and distinguishable sub-topics presented in 3 main points.
 - Main point states claim; supporting points provide evidence (one sentence, each).
 - Transitional sentences before each section and main point (summary/forecast).
 - *Conclusion* with summary, restatement, takeaway message, etc.
 - *References* with sources listed alphabetically, as: Author (date). Title. *Name of Webpage*. URL

Slide Show Requirements

- Slides are in-sync with the speaker’s words, and never distracting or confusing.
- High resolution images only. No blurry, stretched or pixelated images.
- Clear, simple, and legible slides only. Maximum number of words per slide: 12.
- Charts and graphs are clear, labeled and carefully explained.
- Last slide shows References section, same as on manuscript.

Oral Presentation Requirements

- Manuscript/ Slides marked as COMPLETE.
- Oral presentation closely matches manuscript.
- Speaker is prepared, practiced, and poised.
- Style of delivery is extemporaneous, meaning, not entirely read off the manuscript.
- Presentation is timed and within one minute of the 8 to 10-minute time limits.
- Presentation is followed by a discussion period (about 5 minutes).

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