



UNSW
SYDNEY

School of the Arts and Media

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



MDIA3008

Issues and Crisis Communication

Session 1, 2017

Course Outline

Staff Contact Details

Conveners

Name	Email	Availability	Location	Phone
Collin Chua	C.Chua@unsw.edu.au	Tuesday, 9.30am to 11.30am, or by appointment	Webster 231K	93855988

Tutors

Name	Email	Availability	Location	Phone
Paul Ryder	p.ryder@unsw.edu.au			
Peter Roberts	p.j.roberts@unsw.edu.au			
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School Contact Information

Room 312, level 3 Robert Webster Building

Phone: (02) 9385 4856

Email: sam@unsw.edu.au

Website: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au>

Attendance Requirements

A student is expected to attend all class contact hours for a face-to-face (F2F) or blended course and complete all activities for a blended or fully online course.

A student who arrives more than 15 minutes late may be penalised for non-attendance. If such a penalty is imposed, the student must be informed verbally at the end of class and advised in writing within 24 hours.

If a student experiences illness, misadventure or other occurrence that makes absence from a class/activity unavoidable, or expects to be absent from a forthcoming class/activity, they should seek permission from the Course Authority, and where applicable, their request should be accompanied by an original or certified copy of a medical certificate or other form of appropriate evidence.

A Course Authority may excuse a student from classes or activities for up to one month. However, they may assign additional and/or alternative tasks to ensure compliance. A Course Authority considering the granting of absence must be satisfied a student will still be able to meet the course's learning outcomes and/or volume of learning. A student seeking approval to be absent for more than one month must apply in writing to the Dean and provide all original or certified supporting documentation.

For more information about the SAM attendance protocols, see the SAM policies and guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Essential Information

All SAM students must make a valid attempt at all assessments in order to pass the course.

For essential student information relating to: attendance requirements; requests for extension; review of marks; occupational health and safety; examination procedures; special consideration in the event of illness or misadventure; student equity and disability; and other essential matters, see the SAM Policies and Guidelines webpage: <https://sam.arts.unsw.edu.au/students/resources/policies-guidelines/>

Course Details

Credit Points 6

Summary of the Course

This course examines the interdisciplinary and relational nature of issues and crisis communication from conceptual and practical perspectives.

Issues management is a managerial process that acts to provide a response strategy and early warning tool for issues that have the potential to impact organisations. The successful management of issues reduces the likelihood of crisis. Crisis management is the related process involving the development and application of strategies aimed at helping an organisation successfully deal with a sudden and negative event.

Issues and crisis communication refers to the PR-specific practices that emerge from these processes.

Through a range of case studies, this course will explore how issues and crisis impact upon organisations across the business, community, government, and not-for-profit sectors, and will engage in depth with the role of issues and crisis management and communication in strategic planning.

At the conclusion of this course the student will be able to

1. Conceptualise the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication in an organisational setting.
2. Provide detailed analyses of issues and crisis communication at a conceptual and strategic level.
3. Understand the key principles behind designing and developing a crisis communication plan.
4. Think strategically about the role/s of various publics and stakeholders in issues/crisis communication cases.
5. Assess and evaluate the impact of the media in issues and crisis communication in an in-depth fashion.

Teaching Strategies

This is a level three course. It builds on skills developed in level 1 and 2 courses. It will allow students to develop diverse conceptual and strategic skills in PR and professional practice.

Both lectures and tutorials will be open to dialogue and collaboration with the aim of exploring case studies and material in a productive and rigorous fashion.

This course is NOT about rote learning, but rather involves actively thinking about and engaging with a number of conceptual frameworks, professional skills, case studies, analytical material, and strategic plans. Students are expected to take control of their own learning, rather than passively expect information to be delivered to them.

Assessment

Assessment Tasks

Assessment task	Weight	Length	Due Date	Submission
Short Essay	25%	1000-1500 words	Friday 31 March, 4pm. Week 5.	Via Turnitin
Presentation	25%	Your group will present for 10 minutes x number of people in the group (e.g., 3 group members, 30 minutes).	Week 7 to Week 13 tutorials.	Presentation only; no Turnitin submission required.
Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan	50%	Critical Analysis (2,500-3000 words), OR Crisis Communication Plan as a collaborative pair (3,500-4000 words).	Due 11.59pm Sunday, 4 June, Week 13	There are separate Turnitin submission boxes for the Critical Analysis / Crisis Comms Plan.

Assessment Details

Assessment 1: Short Essay

Details: Word length: 1,000-1500 words. This assessment is intended to test your developing understanding of the related functions of issues and crisis communications AND your ability to communicate this clearly and effectively. Written feedback, in conjunction with a marking template.

Additional details:

Choose **ONE** essay question to respond to.

1. What is the importance of issues and/or crisis communications for contemporary organisations and companies?
2. What are the specific and relevant insights that stakeholder theory provides for issues and/or crisis communications?
3. How does framing theory provide specific and relevant strategic tools for issues and/or crisis communications?

This assessment is intended to test your developing understanding of the related functions of issues and crisis communications AND your ability to communicate this clearly and effectively.

You are expected to engage with the readings and lecture materials to date, and provide a clear, conceptually rigorous response, from an academic perspective. A sound theoretical knowledge will provide the base for you to acquire an effective sense of operational requirements as well as to develop a useable toolkit of practical strategic/tactical competencies as you enter the industry.

You are advised to select your question with care, as they pose different challenges. For instance, question one is quite general – to do well, your challenge will be to provide a rigorous and effectively supported rationale, *instead* of simply providing a set of broad and generalised statements. With questions two and three, your challenge will be to show that you are developing a strong overall understanding of issues and/or crisis communication, *instead* of simply providing a narrow response drawn from just one week's worth of reading.

Assessment Criteria:

- Proper and fluent written expression.
- Development of a conceptually coherent and thoughtful essay.
- Productive engagement with relevant developments, perspectives, and conceptual frameworks from course readings and lectures.
- Accurate and properly presented referencing.
- Professional visual presentation and formatting.

Turnitin setting: This assignment is submitted through Turnitin, students do not see Turnitin similarity reports

Learning outcomes:

- Conceptualise the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication in an organisational setting.
- Assess and evaluate the impact of the media in issues and crisis communication in an in-depth fashion.
- Think strategically about the role/s of various publics and stakeholders in issues/crisis communication cases.

Assessment 2: Presentation

Details: You will be assigned into a small group (of three to four people), and allocated a week to give a Presentation that addresses the week's topic. In your Presentation, your group is required to critically examine a case study relevant to that week's topic. The Presentation is a group assessment, and you are expected to work in collaboration. Your group will present for 10 minutes x number of people in the group (e.g., 3 group members, 30 minutes). Written feedback, in conjunction with a marking template.

Additional details:

You will be assigned into a small group (of three to four people), and allocated a week to give a Presentation that addresses the week's topic. In your Presentation, your group is required to critically examine a case study of your choice that is relevant to that week's topic.

The Presentation is a group assessment, and you are expected to work in collaboration. Your group will present for 10 minutes x number of people in the group (e.g., 3 group members, 30 minutes). Your tutor will hold your group strictly to this time limit.

You should treat this task as a means to practice putting together and preparing a professional client Presentation. When delivering Presentations at university level, a common weakness is to simply talk through a collection of points, or recap the week's material. **For this task, you will be assessed on the**

quality of your presentation skills, AND the quality of your insights, NOT simply how well you can summarise course materials. (How well can you apply the principles we are learning to analyse things for yourselves?)

You are advised to follow this general format with your Presentation.

1. **Introduction.** What are you talking about? Why is this topic relevant (i.e., why should people care)? How are you tackling the topic (what is your approach and/or methodology)?
2. **Overview.** What are the key contexts? What are the most important developments? Which are the key aspects of the issues/crisis?
3. **Analysis/recommendations.** What are the key mistakes and/or key successes with regards to communications strategy? WHY (how can you substantiate or support your analysis)? What would you recommend? What are your insights? How can you support your points with relevant facts, data, and/or theoretical frameworks?
4. **Conclusion.** What are the key takeaways you wish to leave your audience with?

Working in a small group will typically be a common activity for working in the industry. A key premise behind this assessment task is for you to treat the complexities and uncertainties of group dynamics and interactions as a fundamental aspect of the learning process – as a valuable opportunity of practicing for and coming to terms with an activity that you will need to become proficient with.

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to work professionally as a team to take charge and to lead a Presentation.
- Ability to select and develop an appropriate case study, with scope for analysis.
- Ability to coherently and persuasively communicate key ideas and points.
- Ability to provide an effective and succinct overview, showing strong understanding of the relevant industry contexts and issues relating to the selected case study.
- Ability to provide meaningful insights, analysis, and/or recommendations, properly supported by relevant concepts, data, and theory.
- Ability to respond clearly and effectively when challenged with questions.

Turnitin setting: This is not a Turnitin assignment

Learning outcomes:

- Conceptualise the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication in an organisational setting.
- Think strategically about the role/s of various publics and stakeholders in issues/crisis communication cases.
- Assess and evaluate the impact of the media in issues and crisis communication in an in-depth fashion.
- Provide detailed analyses of issues and crisis communication at a conceptual and strategic level.

Assessment 3: Critical Analysis OR Crisis Communication Plan

Details: There are two choices available in terms of this major project. You can submit an individual Critical Analysis (2,500-3000 words), OR submit a Crisis Communication Plan as a collaborative pair (3,500-4000 words). This is the final assessment task. Written feedback, in conjunction with a marking

template.

Additional details:

This major assessment will be worth a substantial percentage of your final mark. It has been deliberately designed this way, as working in the industry will be dependent on the success of major projects you are involved with. Some time will be set aside in classes late in the semester, in order to workshop the major assessment.

There are two choices available in terms of this major project. **You can submit an individual Critical Analysis (2,500-3000 words), OR submit a Crisis Communication Plan as a collaborative pair (3,500-4000 words).**

For the Critical Analysis, your task is to analyse ONE case study. A selection of three possible case studies to choose from will be posted on Moodle approximately two weeks before the assessment deadline. This is intended to provide some semblance of the time pressure, spontaneity, and lack of foresight that properly characterise crises and issues. *These case studies will be drawn from actual events, and will have occurred within the past five years.* Case studies will be discussed in lectures throughout the semester.

A suggested format is as follows:

1. **Introduction.** What's the case study, and why is it relevant for issues/crisis communications? How are you tackling the topic (what is your *methodology*)? Do you have one or two effective research questions or hypotheses to apply? Is there a specific theoretical foundation (such as framing theory, IRT, SCCT, etc.) that you will use?
2. **Overview.** What are the key contexts? What are the most important developments? Which are the key aspects of the issues/crisis? Why?
3. **Analysis/recommendations.** What are the key mistakes and/or key successes with regards to communications strategy? Why? What would you recommend? What are your insights? How can you support your points with relevant facts, data, and/or theoretical frameworks?
4. **Conclusion.** What are the key takeaways?

For the Critical Analysis, you will be required to adhere to proper academic conventions. You are expected to draw on *the relevant readings and course materials*. Use of external readings and sources as *supplementary* material will be of benefit.

Assessment Criteria (Critical Analysis):

- Ability to develop a clearly argued, well-researched, and conceptually solid perspective on your case study.
- Ability to show a strong understanding of relevant principles and theoretical frameworks behind issues/crisis communication.
- Ability to provide meaningful and properly supported analysis and/or recommendations.
- Fluent and coherent written expression.
- Accurate and properly presented referencing.
- Professional visual presentation and formatting.

For a Crisis Communication Plan, you will be working as a collaborative pair, with a partner of your choice. Both parties will receive the same mark/grade, so please choose your partner carefully. (*You do NOT have the option of working on this task individually, as Crisis Communication Plans are typically produced by small teams of people working together in a collaborative fashion; hence why you are required to work with a partner for this task.*)

For this task, you are required to create a comprehensive, effective, and clearly navigable Crisis Communication Plan for a company or organisation. (You are advised to choose a small-to-medium enterprise.) *Please refer to the assessment criteria below.*

This company/organisation can be hypothetical or actual. If you choose an actual company/organisation, you will need to attach a signed letter from a company representative holding a senior management position, confirming that: (1.) They are giving you permission to create a Crisis Comms Plan for the company/organisation; (2.) The company/organisation does not have a pre-existing Crisis Comms Plan.

For the Crisis Communication Plan, you will be required to adhere to accepted industry practice conventions. While you are expected to make productive use of relevant readings and lecture materials, and to use external readings and sources as supplementary material if you wish – these do not need to be explicitly cited in the Plan, as it is intended to be a professional business report, not an academic piece of writing.

You will be learning about the various elements of a Crisis Communication plan *throughout* the course, and key aspects will be discussed during the lectures. Some useful resources will also be available on Moodle.

* Each pair should submit ONE Crisis Communication Plan to Turnitin. The other student should simply submit ONLY a cover page, with basic information such as your name, student number, and the details of your partner.

Assessment Criteria (Crisis Communication Plan):

- Relevant selection and overview of a hypothetical company/organisation in need of a Crisis Communication Plan.
- Appropriate coverage of and engagement with organisational history, reputation, goals, and industry context.
- Effective identification and analysis of the organisation's key risks and issues.
- Ability to effectively put together and present the necessary components of a comprehensive Crisis Plan relevant to your selected organisation.
- Fluent and coherent written expression.
- Professional visual presentation, in accordance with the conventions of a business report format.

Turnitin setting: This assignment is submitted through Turnitin, students do not see Turnitin similarity reports

Learning outcomes:

- Conceptualise the significance and functions of issues and crisis communication in an organisational setting.
- Provide detailed analyses of issues and crisis communication at a conceptual and strategic level.
- Understand the key principles behind designing and developing a crisis communication plan.

- Think strategically about the role/s of various publics and stakeholders in issues/crisis communication cases.
- Assess and evaluate the impact of the media in issues and crisis communication in an in-depth fashion.

Submission of Assessment Tasks

Students are expected to put their names and student numbers on every page of their assignments.

Turnitin Submission

If you encounter a problem when attempting to submit your assignment through Turnitin, please telephone External Support on 9385 3331 or email them on externalteltsupport@unsw.edu.au. Support hours are 8:00am – 10:00pm on weekdays and 9:00am – 5:00pm on weekends (365 days a year). If you are unable to submit your assignment due to a fault with Turnitin you may apply for an extension, but you must retain your ticket number from External Support (along with any other relevant documents) to include as evidence to support your extension application. If you email External Support you will automatically receive a ticket number, but if you telephone you will need to specifically ask for one. Turnitin also provides updates on their system status on Twitter.

Generally in SAM there will no longer be any hard-copy submission; assessments must be submitted electronically via either Turnitin or a Moodle assignment. In instances where this is not possible it will be stated on your course's moodle site with alternative submission details.

Late Assessment Penalties

An assessed task is deemed late if it is submitted after the specified time and date as set out in the course Learning Management System (LMS).

The late penalty is the loss of 5% of the total possible marks for the task for each day or part thereof the work is late. Lateness will include weekends and public holidays. This does not apply to a task that is assessed but no mark is awarded.

Work submitted fourteen days after the due date will be marked and feedback provided but no mark will be recorded. If the work would have received a pass mark but for the lateness and the work is a compulsory course component a student will be deemed to have met that requirement. This does not apply to a task that is assessed but no mark is awarded.

Work submitted twenty-one days after the due date will not be accepted for marking or feedback and will receive no mark or grade. If the assessment task is a compulsory component of the course a student will automatically fail the course.

Special Consideration Applications

You can apply for special consideration when illness or other circumstances interfere with your assessment performance.

Sickness, misadventure or other circumstances beyond your control may:

- * Prevent you from completing a course requirement,
- * Keep you from attending an assessable activity,
- * Stop you submitting assessable work for a course,

* Significantly affect your performance in assessable work, be it a formal end-of-semester examination, a class test, a laboratory test, a seminar presentation or any other form of assessment.

For further details in relation to Special Consideration including 'When to Apply', 'How to Apply' and 'Supporting Documentation' please refer to the Special Consideration website:
<https://student.unsw.edu.au/special-consideration>

Academic Honesty and Plagiarism

Plagiarism is using the words or ideas of others and presenting them as your own. It can take many forms, from deliberate cheating to accidentally copying from a source without acknowledgement.

UNSW groups plagiarism into the following categories:

Copying: using the same or very similar words to the original text or idea without acknowledging the source or using quotation marks. This also applies to images, art and design projects, as well as presentations where someone presents another's ideas or words without credit.

Inappropriate paraphrasing: changing a few words and phrases while mostly retaining the original structure and information without acknowledgement. This also applies in presentations where someone paraphrases another's ideas or words without credit. It also applies to piecing together quotes and paraphrases into a new whole, without referencing and a student's own analysis to bring the material together.

Collusion: working with others but passing off the work as a person's individual work. Collusion also includes providing your work to another student before the due date, or for the purpose of them plagiarising at any time, paying another person to perform an academic task, stealing or acquiring another person's academic work and copying it, offering to complete another person's work or seeking payment for completing academic work.

Inappropriate citation: Citing sources which have not been read, without acknowledging the "secondary" source from which knowledge of them has been obtained.

Duplication ("self-plagiarism"): submitting your own work, in whole or in part, where it has previously been prepared or submitted for another assessment or course at UNSW or another university.

Correct referencing practices;

Paraphrasing, summarising, essay writing and time management

Appropriate use of and attribution for a range of materials including text, images, formulae and concepts.

Individual assistance is available on request from The Learning Centre. Students are also reminded that careful time management is an important part of study and one of the identified causes of plagiarism is poor time management. Students should allow sufficient time for research, drafting and proper referencing of sources in preparing all assessment items.

Course Schedule

Timetable

Date	Type	Content
Week 1: 27 February - 5 March	Lecture	Introduction to issues and crisis communications
	Tutorial	<i>No tutorials in week 1; tutorials begin in Week 2.</i>
Week 2: 6 - 12 March	Lecture	A relational approach to issues and crises
	Tutorial	<i>Intro to issues and crisis communications</i>
Week 3: 13 - 19 March	Lecture	Communicating in crisis to stakeholders
	Tutorial	<i>A relational approach to issues and crises</i>
Week 4: 20 - 26 March	Lecture	Utilising frames and key messages
	Tutorial	<i>Communicating in crisis to stakeholders</i>
Week 5: 27 March - 2 April	Lecture	Crisis communication planning
	Tutorial	
Week 6: 3 - 9 April	Lecture	Image repair strategies
	Tutorial	<i>Crisis communication planning</i>
Week 7: 10 - 16 April	Lecture	Situational crisis communication theory
	Tutorial	<i>Image repair strategies</i>
Week 8: 24 - 30 April	Lecture	The Internet and social media
	Tutorial	<i>Situational crisis communication theory</i>
Week 9: 1 - 7 May	Lecture	Airline crises / Developing best practice
	Tutorial	<i>The Internet and social media</i>
Week 10: 8 - 14 May	Lecture	BP oil spill / Leadership during crisis
	Tutorial	<i>Airline crises / Developing best practice</i>
Week 11: 15 - 21 May	Lecture	SARS, flus, pandemics / Strategic responses
	Tutorial	<i>BP oil spill / Leadership during crisis</i>
Week 12: 22 - 28 May	Lecture	Sports and PR / Facing issues and crises
	Tutorial	<i>SARS, flus, pandemics / Strategic responses</i>

Date	Type	Content
Week 13: 29 May - 4 June	Lecture	No lecture in Week 13.
	Tutorial	<i>Sports and PR / Facing issues and crises</i>

Resources

Prescribed Resources

- Website – Resources will be available on the Course Moodle website.

Recommended Resources

Further Reading

Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S.J. (Eds.), 2001, *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*, edited by Malden, MA: Blackwell

Galloway, C. & Kwanash-Aidoo, K., 2009, *Public Relations Issues and Crisis Management*, Melbourne: Thomson Social Science Press

Gilpin, D.R. & Murphy, P.J., 2008, *Crisis Management in a Complex World*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

Griffin, A., 2009, *New Strategies for Reputation Management: Gaining Control of Issues, Crises and Corporate Social Responsibility*, London: Kogan Page

Heath, R. & Palenchar, M.J., 2008, *Strategic Issues Management: Organisations and Public Policy Challenges*, 2nd edition, California, Thousand Oaks: Sage

Heath, R.L. & O'Hair, H.D. (Eds.), 2009, *Handbook of Risk and Crisis Communication*, New York: Routledge

Howard, C., 1984, *Issues Management: Origins of the future*, Stamford, CT: Issue Action Publishers

Jaques, T., 2014, *Issue and Crisis Management: Exploring Issues, Crises, Risk and Reputation*, South Melbourne, Victoria: Oxford University Press

Regester, M. & Larkin, J., 2008, *Risk Issues and Crisis Management in Public Relations: A Casebook of Best Practice*, 4th edition, London: CIPR

Toth, E.L. (Ed.), 2007, *The Future of Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management: Challenges for the Next Generation*, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Journals

Asia Pacific Public Relations Journal

Journal of Business Communication

Journal of Business Ethics

Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management

Journal of Communication Management

Journal of Public Relations Research

Public Relations Review

* This is a list of supplementary reading resources, which may be helpful in doing further research. You are, of course, encouraged to move beyond these suggested texts.

Course Evaluation and Development

Your feedback gathered from the surveys at the end of the session offers valuable input. Your experiences and suggestions are important, and there is always room for improvement in terms of content and teaching strategies.

Image Credit

<http://travelnewsnepal.com/opinion/crisis-communication-to-minimize-human-induced-hazards/>