



## University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

College of Fine Arts and Communication  
Division of Communication

Stevens Point WI 54481-3897  
715-346-3409; Fax 715-346-4769  
www.uwsp.edu/comm/

### Communication 339/539: Crisis Communication Tuesday 3 p.m. – 4:50 p.m.

Thomas Salek, PhD	: Instructor
CAC 305	: Office
tsalek@uwsp.edu	: Email
715-346-3401	: Phone
M: 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.	: Office Hours
W: 3:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.	

#### Required Texts:

- Dan P. Millar and Robert L. Heath, *Responding to Crisis: A Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication* (Mahwah, NJ: 2004)
- Additional readings posted to our class D2L site.

#### Course Description

In our personal and professional lives, we do our best to plan ahead and prevent interpersonal or organizational conflict from turning into a public crisis. This course examines how communication is the foundation to crisis management and prevention. In this course students will learn how to use communication to help prevent conflict from turning into a crisis, how to strategically plan ahead for a potential crisis, as well as strategies for dealing with a crisis after it has become public. In order to understand how crisis communication functions, we will examine a number of case studies about individuals, companies, and governments. Some of these case studies illustrate a successful response to a crisis, others highlight how strategic planning helped turn a potential crisis into a non-issue, other case studies highlight instances where communication practices failed to adequately respond to the crisis on hand. Focused on analyzing and creating strategic crisis communication plans and practices, this course helps students build analytical and risk assessment skills for dealing with crisis in their personal and professional lives. Assignments will include personal reaction and analysis papers, as well as a group assignment on how to publicly respond to a crisis in verbal and written formats. Each class session is designed to be participatory with an emphasis on discussion, as well as individual and group assignments. In addition to relying on our textbook, we will draw from historical and contemporary crises.

#### Course Objectives

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the various theories on crisis communication management.
2. Develop and execute a strategic communication plan for crisis management and press conference.
3. Compose effective communication messages through AP Style, flawless grammar, clear writing and public speaking.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical principles surrounding the field of Public Relations and public culture.

#### Division of Communication Learning Objectives for Communication Majors

This course will help you achieve the Division's objectives for all majors.

1. Communicate effectively using appropriate technologies for diverse audiences. (e.g., News Conference)

2. Plan, evaluate and conduct basic communication research. (e.g., Film Analysis Paper, Image Restoration Letter, and News Conference).
3. Use communication theories to understand and solve communication problems. (e.g., Image Restoration Letter or Research Paper)
4. Apply historical communication perspectives to contemporary issues and practices.
5. Apply principles of ethical decision making in communication contexts. (e.g., Image Restoration Letter)

## Course Requirements

Assignments	Points
Course Policies Agreement	20
Crisis Case Study Presentation	100
Weekly Online Reading Quizzes	100
Classroom Professionalism	50
Exams (2 @ 100 points each)	200
Film Analysis and Communication Strategy Paper	200
Image Restoration Letter	150
Group News Conference	180
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,000</b>

Extra Credit: Extra credit may be announced in class only. These opportunities are optional. Specific directions will be provided when the opportunity arises.

### Course Policies Agreement

At the start of the semester students will electronically sign a course policies agreement and upload it to the D2L dropbox. The course policy agreement lists documents that must be reviewed before the course begins. To receive credit, students must read the appropriate documents, indicate that the materials have been read, and then upload the agreement to the D2L dropbox.

### Crisis Case Study Presentation

At one point in the semester you will be asked to find and present a contemporary crisis case study from the news. To complete this assignment you must:

1. Research a recent crisis case study (i.e., has happened in the past month)
2. Craft a 2-5 minute presentation on your case study. In this presentation you should align this crisis with specific course concepts (i.e., explain what was done well/poorly in this crisis according to our course readings/lectures).
3. Lead a 5-10 minute discussion on the crisis with the class.

### Classroom Professionalism

Anyone who misses a class should make arrangements with another student to copy notes, review announcements, and so forth. The instructor will present course materials only during designated class periods and will not reiterate materials from an entire class session during office hours. If students have specific questions that seek clarification about course content from a previous class period, they should not hesitate to ask, and the instructor will gladly work to clarify the course materials. However, students should not arrive at an instructor's office hours with the assumption that the instructor will "go over whatever I missed."Continually arriving late and/or leaving early is strongly discouraged. If it becomes a distraction, the instructor will reach out directly to the student via email or face-to-face.

**Fifty (50) points** are earned through classroom professionalism. **Please note that simply attending class does not constitute as professionalism.** Students are expected to be active in class (i.e., engaged in discussion/activities and making substantive connections to the course material/textbook). Below are four Professionalism principles. Students who follow all four of these principles will receive full points for professionalism.

- **Participation:** Participation includes making helpful comments, grounded in key course concepts. These comments should help others in the class better understand the material. Remember that active listening is another key communication component.
- **Preparation:** Everyone is expected to have their book and read the assigned chapter(s) before attending class.
- **Punctuality:** There are unavoidable circumstances to be late, but make every effort to always arrive on time. If, for some reason, you run late on presentation days, **do not walk into the classroom or knock on the door while one of your classmates is presenting.** Please wait until the presentation has finished to enter.
- **Politeness:** The classroom is an inclusive and professional environment. Everyone is to be treated with respect. Do not engage in side conversations, or be disruptive, when someone is speaking in front of the room. All types of communication in this course should be formal and professional. For example, when emailing the instructor or your colleagues, remember to include a proper subject line, greeting, and proper grammar.

### Exams

There will be two open book exams throughout the semester. These exams are to demonstrate your understanding of key concepts from the readings, lecture, and class discussions. Exams are scheduled for the following dates:

- Exam 1: March 13
- Exam 2: May 1

### Film Analysis and Communication Strategy Paper

For this paper, you will rely on Lloyd Bitzer's "The Rhetorical Situation" and David Zarefsky's "Definitions" to analyze the exigency or problem marked by urgency. This is a 4 – 6-page paper that involves writing an analysis of a film's rhetorical situation, as well outlining the strategy that a character (or characters) respond to this crisis. This assignment allows you to critically analyze the effectiveness of a crisis communication strategy in a film. You should find a film or TV show centered on a crisis and examine how it was dealt with from beginning to end. Your paper should analyze how the film's person(s)/organization created a consistent, inconsistent or situational response to a public crisis. The assignment will require you to cite our textbook, as well as additional readings. You should also directly refer to the film to be as clear as possible.

To complete this assignment, you must:

1. Pick one of the recommended films or TV shows below that you want to watch and analyze.
2. Focus on one individual or institution in the film and analyze their communication practices throughout the entire crisis. You should examine everything ranging from news conferences, social media usage, speeches (i.e., whatever information is available given your text).
3. Based on your case study, produce the person or organization's communication strategy using the template provided in class. **(Turn this in with your paper).**
4. Write a 4 – 6-page analysis paper that cites key quotations and insights from our class readings.
5. Your paper should analyze the successfulness or failure of the communication strategy used. In your critique, you should note communication transactions that were particularly effective (and provide evidence/reasoning as to why you reached to that conclusion). Likewise, you should provide instances where communication was ineffective (and provide evidence/reasoning as to why).
6. To ground your paper in our course concepts, cite the readings directly. Provide a bibliography and in text citations when referring to the book or an outside source.
7. Please note that papers will be graded on the quality of their analysis, argument, the ability to follow the paper guidelines, and spelling/grammar.

#### Recommended Texts:

- *Arrival* (2016)
- *The Crown* (2016, Episode “Act of God”)
- *Deepwater Horizon* (2016)
- *Jurassic World* (2015)
- *The Martian* (2015)
- *Selma* (2014)
- *No* (2012)
- *The Insider* (1999)
- *Primary Colors* (1998)
- *Wag The Dog* (1997)
- *Titanic* (1997)
- *Apollo 13* (1995)
- *Jaws* (1975)
- *Another approved film*

#### Image Repair Letter

This assignment allows you to put your crisis communication skills to practice by writing a **4 – 5-page public letter** to a person or organization that has experienced a crisis. Your role in this assignment is to write a letter as a PR Professional/Student. Your goal is to outline the rhetorical exigency and ongoing crisis that your subject faces/has faced. In your letter, you should provide two concrete recommendations on how your subject can repair their image in the wake of this crisis. Your recommendations should be based on the image repair strategies discussed in this class. Even though this is a letter, you must conduct your own research for this assignment, as well as apply certain key ideas discussed in class.

To complete this assignment, you should think about the following:

1. What current event or crisis interests you? Find a crisis that was not handled well by an individual or organization.
2. Think through what practical advice you could give this individual or organization based on the best practices from our textbook or lectures in class.
3. Research how your chosen person, business or institution is responded to the selected crisis.
4. Research and analyze the effectiveness of their communication strategies—pointing to effective and ineffective examples.
5. Tie your analysis of the crisis to key course readings and ideas. Papers must include citations to the textbook and your own original research.
6. Finally, after analyzing why the subject of your paper failed to have an adequate crisis communication response, make two concrete recommendations on how they could improve their communication skills and restore their image. In other words, give two concrete recommendations for how they use rhetoric or words to repair their image.
7. Tie your recommendations to key concepts from the class. You should cite the textbook or supplemental readings. The idea is to put theory into practice. Explain key course concepts to the person you are writing. In short, teach them some of the crisis communication best practices we’ve been examining throughout the semester.
8. Please note that papers will be graded on the quality of their analysis, argument, the ability to follow the paper guidelines, and spelling/grammar.

#### Group Crisis Communication Press Conference and Backgrounder

*Consists of four parts*

For this project, you will work in teams of 5-6 to produce the strategy and content for an entire crisis news conference and Q&A session. After selecting your team members, create a crisis that would require an initial response and image restoration strategies. Your crisis can be anything from a celebrity break-up to a political scandal.

**Part one** of the group assignment requires that you work with your team members to create a backgrounder for members of the media and public (i.e., your classmates). A backgrounder is a long-form press release. In this document, your group should define the crisis and give all the necessary background information. For more information about backgrounders, see the “Backgrounder Description” on our D2L site. The written part of this assignment is worth 60 points.

For **part two**, the oral segment of the group project, you will execute an entire 20-minute news conference that includes a Q&A session. The primary goal of this assignment is to develop your strategic communication skills in both written and spoken form. The assignment will be evaluated holistically on the content, as well as the group’s ability to maintain a clear message and strategy throughout the entire press conference.

Although individual group members may take responsibility for certain parts of the press conference, the entire group should develop the strategy, speaking roles, and key messages. The idea behind this group project is to begin working as a team at the beginning of the semester and develop the project over the course of several weeks. The oral part of this assignment is worth 60 points.

Development of the Press Conference will include several items, specifically:

1. An introductory statement that defines the crisis and events leading up to its occurrence.
2. A timeline of events from the moment the event turned into a public crisis.
3. A statement from an authority figure who was a first responder and/or is directly involved with resolving the crisis at hand.
4. A statement on next steps for resolving this crisis and when the next communication will occur.
5. A designated spokesperson who provides answers from the news media and public.

In addition to creating content for your group’s press conference, **part three** of this assignment requires that you act as a reporter or member of the public during each of the other groups’ press conferences. You will be charged with the duty of asking a question about the crisis at hand. This question should not be developed on the spot, but instead researched beforehand through a briefing report. This part of the assignment is worth 10 points.

Finally, **part four** is a short peer review worth 50 points. On a scale from 0 – 50 points, you will individually rate yourself and your partners. The average of these ratings will be allocated toward the peer review portion of the grade. In order to justify your grade, you must give at least two sentences of evidence and reasoning for each group member, as well as yourself. The idea is to work as a team and hold everyone accountable. To demonstrate your effectiveness as a team, you should grade each member honestly. If major group problems arise, please see your instructor immediately (i.e., don’t wait until the peer review to say that someone didn’t do any work...try to get ahead of that ASAP).

## GENERAL GRADING POLICIES

### Submission of Assignments

All assignments should be submitted **on D2L** by the specified date. You do not need to print off hard copies (unless otherwise specified).

### Grading Policy

All course work is due by the date and time listed in the schedule unless otherwise noted. Requests to extend a due date for an assignment will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and the instructor has final say about any such arrangement. Requests should be made before an assignment is due—except in extenuating circumstances with documentation. Late work automatically will be docked 10% for each 24 hours after an assignment is due. *Please note: Even if an assignment is turned in 1-minute past the deadline it will be considered late and subject to the 10% penalty.*

Discussion of grades on assignments must take place before two weeks have elapsed from the receipt of the grade. After this, students are free to contact the instructor for clarification about a grade, but all numeric scores for assignments are final and will not be modified, regardless of the result of the discussion. In other words, don't wait until the last week of the class to ask about a possible grading error on an assignment that was completed more than two weeks prior. Grade disputes must be submitted in a written format (printed document or via email). In the document, provide concrete and defensible reasons for disputing a grade. Following receipt of the document, the instructor will review it and either reply with an explanation and/or may request a meeting with the student.

### **Grading Criteria for All Written Assignments**

Written assignments for this class should follow the assignment guidelines. In any written work, please remember to provide arguments with ample evidence. This course is graded with the idea that an "A" is reserved for outstanding work. This means that the assignment demonstrates strong critical-thinking skills, makes an argument, supports it with ample evidence and is virtually error free. In contrast, a "C" is reserved for average work. This means that the assignment follows the minimum requirements, but may be unclear or not contain enough support.

Here are a few guidelines to follow before submitting written documents:

- Assignments should follow ALL the guidelines posted to D2L.
- Ideas are clearly expressed and supported with ample evidence from the course readings and/or outside sources.
- Assignments contain proper grammar and spelling (i.e., the paper has been thoroughly proofread). One way to ensure a paper is error free and easy to read is to read the paper out loud prior to submitting.
- Any assignment should follow APA style guidelines when citing research.
- Specific grading rubrics for each assignment will be available prior to its submission.

### **Revision Policy**

One of the key aspects to this course is to hone in your writing skills. As part of that focus, editing is always the most important part of the writing process. **Those who earn less than an 80 percent on a written assignment** will be permitted to revise the assignment in order to improve the grade, according to the following policy:

1. **No revisions will be allowed for assignments earning an 80 percent or higher.**
2. A revision does NOT guarantee a higher grade. You must show significant improvement to earn a higher grade.
3. A revision can improve the grade by up to 10 percentage points.
4. No revisions will be permitted for group projects or the final project.
5. Revisions will be due one week after you receive feedback.
6. Late work cannot be revised.
7. Discussion posts cannot be revised—you can always post more than the minimum.

### **Final Grade Scale**

<b>Grading Scale</b>	<b>Letter Grade</b>
1000-925	A
924-895	A-
894-875	B+

874-825	B
824-795	B-
794-775	C+
774-725	C
724-695	C-
694-675	D+
674-625	D
624-595	D-
594-0	F

## GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

Read the following policies carefully. Enrollment in the class constitutes agreement with and understanding of these policies. Ignorance of these policies does not excuse their violation.

### Technology in the Classroom

Laptops or tablets may be used to take notes and for collaborative in-class assignments. Cell phones should be silenced and not used in the classroom. If you are expecting a phone call or text message that is absolutely urgent, please let the instructor know ahead of time, and then quietly excuse yourself from the room to take care of the matter. Adherence of this technology policy is part of the Participation and Professionalism course grade.

### Excuses for Missed Work

Your instructor, on a case-by-case basis, will evaluate excuses for missed work. Permission to make up missed work will be granted only in the most unusual of circumstances, and only for excused absences. Any work missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up. These requirements are necessarily strict and enforced in order to provide fairness to all class participants.

To be eligible for permission to make up an assignment due to a verified absence, you must provide:

- Written evidence of the absolute need for you to be absent (emails are not acceptable)
- This evidence must be from an appropriate, verifiable source

Evidence must be presented to your instructor no later than one week after the missed assignment. Except in the cases of extreme emergency, however, students who need to be absent should contact their instructor at least one week *prior* to the date they will be absent. The primary requirement of the evidence for the absence is that it must demonstrate that a circumstance beyond your control required you to miss class on that day. Not being able to find a parking space is not a circumstance beyond your control, nor is oversleeping. On the other hand, if you have a note from a doctor verifying that you had an illness that prevented you from attending class, that would count as a circumstance beyond your control, as would being called up for military service or jury duty, as long as you provide the appropriate documentation. When it comes to being present and prepared on the days a quiz or class assignment is being given, it is presumed that most things are under your control. You will only be permitted to make up a quiz or assignment due to extraordinary crises. Carelessness and unpreparedness, and all the things that result from them, will not be considered valid reasons for making up a speech or exam.

### Technology Requirements

Written work must be posted to the D2L dropbox in Microsoft Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF formats only. No other formats will be accepted. If the instructor cannot open your document, it will not count as being turned in, and you must reformat and repost. Late penalties will apply. Be sure to keep copies of your work and the feedback for the entire duration of the class.

When necessary, the instructor will communicate with the class and/or individual students via the email address listed in your D2L account. It is your responsibility to check that email account regularly.

### **Plagiarism and Academic Integrity**

From the UWSP 14.01 STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES – Students are responsible for the honest completion and representation of their work, for the appropriate citation of sources, and for respect of others’ academic endeavors. Students who violate these standards must be confronted and must accept the consequences of their actions. For more info: <http://www.uwsp.edu/dos/Pages/Academic-Misconduct.aspx>

Note: Submissions via D2L will be automatically screened for plagiarism.

### **Students with Special Needs/Disabilities**

If you have a disability and require accommodation, please register with the Disability and Assistive Technology Center (6th floor of the Learning Resource Center – that is, the Library) and contact me at the beginning of the course. More information is available here: <http://www4.uwsp.edu/special/disability/>.

### **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of an emergency, this course complies with UWSP’s outline for various situations. A full list of these emergency plans is available here: <http://www.uwsp.edu/rmgt/Pages/em/procedures/default.aspx>

### **A Note on Achieving Academic Success in this Course**

I cannot wait to work with each and every one of you throughout the semester. I want everyone in this course to achieve their academic goals. To reach this end, I am happy to be here for you as much as you’d like. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me via email or stop by my office at any time. Throughout the semester there will be at least one required one-on-one individual appointment to discuss class participation and course goals. However, if you’d like to discuss individual assignments or anything, do not hesitate to reach out.

## **Course Schedule**

*This schedule reflects major readings and writing assignments. Additional assignments may be required throughout the semester. I may make changes to this schedule as I see fit to meet the needs of the class and take advantage of opportunities on your behalf.*

Class Date	Topic	Readings / Class Activities	Graded Assignment Due
Jan. 23	A Rhetorical Approach to Crisis Communication	Millar, Chapter 1  Ziegelmueller, Argument Defined (D2L)  Discussion on creating a professional public response to crisis (Ryan Lochte example)	



		Lecture on Argumentation and the Role of Rhetoric	
Jan. 30	Crisis Management	<p>Millar, Chapters 4 &amp; 5</p> <p>Seeger and Snellow, "Narratives of Crisis" (D2L)</p> <p>Lecture on the Stages of a Crisis</p> <p>Class Activity on Building a Crisis Plan from BWV Chicken Head Scandal</p>	Course Policies Agreement
Feb. 6	The Rhetorical Situation and Crisis Communication Plans	<p>Lloyd F. Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," <i>Philosophy &amp; Rhetoric</i> 1 (1968): 1-14.</p> <p>David Zarefsky, "Presidential Rhetoric and the Power of Definition," <i>Presidential Studies Quarterly</i> 34, no. 3 (2004), 607-619.</p> <p>RFK, Assassination of MLK (D2L)</p> <p>Class Discussion on Bitzer and the Rhetorical Situation</p> <p>Fern-Banks, Chapter 15 (D2L)</p> <p>Fern-Banks, Appendix A (D2L)</p> <p>Class Activity/Discussion on How to Help Phil Davison</p>	
Feb. 13	<p>Moving From Crisis Planning to Rhetorical Action</p> <p>Apologia and Image Repair</p>	<p>Sellnow and Seeger, Theories of Influence (D2L)</p> <p>Benoit, "Trump's Access Hollywood Tape and Image Repair"</p> <p>Lecture on the Value of Theories</p>	

Feb. 20	Apologia (not an apology) and How to Apologize	<p>Jasinski, Apologia (D2L)</p> <p>Joshua M. Bentley, "Shifting Identification: A Theory of Apologies and Pseudo-Apologies," <i>Public Relations Review</i> 41 (2015), 22-29.</p> <p>Sing Bik Cindy Ngai and Jesper Falkheimer, "How IKEA Turned a Crisis into an Opportunity," <i>Public Relations Review</i> 43 (2017), 246-248.</p> <p>Apologia vs. Apologia Activity</p>	
Feb. 27	Crisis Management / Catch Up Day	<p>Smith and Millar, "Building the Crisis Communication Plan," <i>Before Crisis Hits</i></p> <p>Leinemann and Baikaltseva, How to Manage a Successful Press Conference (pp. 105-143)</p> <p>In-class screening and discussion of <i>The West Wing: Celestial Navigation (1.15)</i></p>	<p>Film Analysis Paper Due</p> <p><b>No Quiz</b></p>
March 6	Analyzing President Bill Clinton's Use of Apologia	<p>Herbert W. Simons, "A Dilemma-Centered Analysis of Clinton's August 17<sup>th</sup> Apologia: Implications for Rhetorical Theory and Method," <i>Quarterly Journal of Speech</i> 86, no. 4 (2000), 438-453.</p> <p>Michael R. Kramer and Kathryn M. Olson, "The Strategic Potential of Sequencing Apologia Stases: President Clinton's Self-Defense in the Monica Lewinski Scandal," <i>Western Communication Journal</i> 66, no. 3 (2002), 347-368.</p>	
March 13	Exam 1 (held online)		<p>Exam 1</p> <p><b>No Quiz</b></p>

March 20	Narrating a Crisis to Internal and External Publics	Seeger and Sellnow, The Consequences of Crisis Narratives (D2L)  Kent, "The Power of Storytelling in Public Relations: Introducing the 20 Master Plots," <i>Public Relations Review</i> 41 (2015), 480-489.  Millar, Chapter 11	
March 27		SPRING BREAK	
April 3	Nonverbal Cues in Crisis Communication Press Conferences	Aurelie De Waele and An-Sofie Claeys, "Nonverbal Cues of Deception in Audiovisual Crisis Communication," <i>Public Relations Review</i> 43 (2015), 680-689.	Class held online
April 10	Moving Beyond Crisis Communication Plans to Best Practices	Millar, Chapter 17  Seeger, Best Practices (D2L)  Heath, Best Practices (D2L)  Impromptu Press Conference	
April 17	Ethos During PR Crises	Aristotle, Ethos (D2L)  Jasinski, Ethos (D2L)  Claeys and Cauberghe, "The Role of Favorable Pre-Crisis Reputation in Protecting Organizations During Crises," <i>Public Relations Review</i> 41 (2015), 64-71.  Kim, et. al, "Self-Mocking Crisis Strategy on Social Media: Focusing on Alibaba Chairman Jack Ma in China," <i>Public Relations Review</i> 42 (2016), 903-912.  Discussion on the role of ethos in public relations	
April 24	Constituting Crisis through Public Communication	Vatz, Rhetorical Situation (D2L)  Clergymen, On Events in Birmingham (D2L)	

		MLK, Letter from Birmingham Jail (D2L)  Lecture and Discussion on MLK's Letter	
May 1	Exam 2 (held online)		<b>No Quiz</b>
May 8	Press Conferences		<b>No Quiz</b>
May 15	Final Papers Due		