

University of Puerto Rico
Río Piedras Campus
Faculty of Business Administration
Department of Business Communication

SYLLABUS

COURSE TITLE	Crisis Communication
COURSE CODE	INCO 4102
CONTACT HOURS/CREDITS	45 hours / Three credits
PREREQUISITES, COREQUISITES, AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS	None specified

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Study of planned and contingent crisis-communication processes that connect stakeholders before, during, and after a crisis. Students discuss and problematize crisis-communication theories and use case studies to apply those theories as ways of knowing and thinking. They devise communication strategies to prepare for, reduce, limit, and respond to crisis-management issues. The course may be offered face-to-face, in hybrid format, or online.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain the relationship between communication and theory.
- Describe major crisis-communication theories.
- Write a crisis-communication plan.
- Demonstrate how crisis communication can prevent, cause, accelerate, and support recovery from a crisis event.
- Apply practical crisis-communication principles to a relevant crisis.

COURSE CONTENT AND DISTRIBUTION OF TIME

Topic and content	Face-to-face	Hybrid	Online
1. Course overview Objectives, content, and requirements.	3	3 hours (1.5 face-to-face: 1 session of 1.5h; 1.5 online)	3
2. Importance of theories Crisis communication: an overview.	3	3 hours (1.5 face-to-face: 1 session of 1.5h; 1.5 online)	3
3. Crisis development theory Strategic choices and decisions.	4	4 hours (1.5 face-to-face: 1 session of 1.5h; 2.5 online)	4
4. Communicating warnings Promoting choices and behaviors.	3	3 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 2.25 online)	3
5. Consequence theories Promoting change and organizational learning.	4	4 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 3.25 online)	4
6. Emergency response communication Its central role in functional and instrumental crisis response.	3	3 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 2.25 online)	3
7. Institutional image repair Influence and persuasion.	3	3 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 2.25 online)	3
8. Crisis-communication ethics Ethical considerations in crisis preparation and response.	4	4 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 3.25 online)	4
9. Outcomes of a crisis Communication challenges and opportunities.	4	4 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 3.25 online)	4

Topic and content	Face-to-face	Hybrid	Online
10. Crisis management Apologia and apology.	4	4 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 3.25 online)	4
11. Chaos and resilience Message forms and content.	2	2 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 1.25 online)	2
12. In-class writing and testing Writing exercises and assessment activities.	8	8 hours (0.75 face-to-face: 1 short session of 45 min; 7.25 online)	8
TOTAL CONTACT HOURS	45	45 (11.25 face-to-face and 33.75 online)	45

Note: In the face-to-face modality, up to 25% of contact hours may be delivered through an alternate (distance) modality, if necessary.

TEXTBOOKS

Fearn-Banks, K. (2017). Crisis communication: A casebook approach. Routledge. Zaremba, A. J. (2015). Crisis communication: Theory and practice. Routledge.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

Face-to-face	Hybrid	Online
• Lectures • Readings • Group work • Individual assignments • Assessment activities • Practice activities • Oral presentations	• Online modules • Professional articles • Instructional videos • Group and individual work • Assessment and practice • Oral presentations • Asynchronous and synchronous conferences	• Interactive modules • Professional articles • Instructional videos • Group and individual work • Assessment and practice • Oral presentations • Videoconferences and synchronous meetings

MINIMUM REQUIRED OR AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Resource	Face-to-face	Hybrid	Online
Institutional learning management system	Institution	Institution	Institution
Institutional e-mail account	Institution	Institution	Institution
Computer or mobile device with high-speed Internet	Student	Student	Student
Word processor, spreadsheet, and presentation software	Student	Student	Student
Integrated or external speakers	Not applicable	Student	Student
Webcam or mobile camera and microphone	Not applicable	Student	Student

EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Face-to-face	Hybrid	Online
• Exams and quizzes: 20% • Writing exercises: 25% • Final essay: 20% • Class work: 25% Attendance and participation: 10% Total: 100%	• Exams and quizzes: 20% • Writing exercises: 25% • Final essay: 20% • Class work: 25% Attendance and participation: 10% Total: 100%	• Exams and quizzes: 10% • Writing exercises: 20% • Final essay: 20% • Forum participation: 30% • Class work: 20% Total: 100%

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

The University of Puerto Rico recognizes the right of students with disabilities to an inclusive, equitable, and comparable postsecondary education. Qualified students are entitled to equal participation and reasonable accommodations or modifications. Students who require an accommodation should notify the professor and promptly submit a request to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (OSEI); disclosure of a diagnosis to the professor is not required.

GUIDELINES FOR THE INTEGRATION AND USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Under Academic Affairs Circular 8, 2024-2025, the use of AI tools is permitted in accordance with institutional and course-specific guidelines. Students must disclose and document any use of AI and explain how it contributed to the work submitted. AI may not be used to misrepresent authorship or to submit non-original content without proper attribution.

ACT 220-2024: ACADEMIC AGREEMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY ATHLETES

Act 220-2024 recognizes the right of certified student-athletes to request reasonable academic adjustments during training or competition periods authorized by the Interuniversity Athletic League (LAI). Official documentation and a written academic agreement are required.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Academic Senate Certification 111 (2023-2024), Río Piedras Campus, requires each course to state clear standards for attendance, punctuality, participation, and make-up work. It addresses excused absences, the Attendance Census, appeals, and procedures for extended absences.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Article 6.2 of the UPR General Student Regulations (Board of Trustees Certification 13, 2009-2010) identifies academic dishonesty, including fraud, plagiarism, unauthorized copying, impersonation, and facilitating such conduct. Academic Senate Certification 64 (2022-2023) further affirms honesty, respect, responsibility, and academic rigor in teaching, learning, and research. Violations are subject to disciplinary action. Users must also protect their institutional credentials.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR ADDRESSING SEX- OR GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION

Pursuant to Governing Board Certification 107, 2021-2022, the University promotes a safe environment and establishes procedures for addressing discrimination based on sex, gender, or pregnancy; sexual harassment; sexual violence; domestic violence; dating violence; and stalking.

GRADING SYSTEM

A, B, C, D, and F.

EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY PLAN

If an emergency or class interruption occurs, the professor will continue the course through distance or online modalities, in accordance with institutional directives, and will communicate with students through institutional e-mail or other available channels.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Austin, L. L., & Jin, Y. (2017). Social media and crisis communication. Taylor & Francis.
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- Barbe, D., & Pennington-Gray, L. (2018). Using situational crisis communication theory to understand Orlando hotels' Twitter response. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*, 1(3), 258-275.
- Coombs, W. T. (2015). The value of communication during a crisis. *Business Horizons*, 58(2), 141-148.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.10.003>
- Ferguson, D. P., Wallace, J. D., & Chandler, R. C. (2018). Hierarchical consistency of strategies in image repair theory. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 30(5-6), 251-272.

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Public Relations Society of America crisis-communication resources; Institute for Public Relations crisis-management resources; Purdue Online Writing Lab; and Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Electronic resources should be reviewed and updated each semester.

Last updated: May 2026