



Risk & Crisis Communications in Agriculture and Natural Resources

FACULTY INFORMATION

Instructor

David L. Doerfert, Ph.D.

Office: 109 Agricultural Education & Communications

Office hours: You are welcome to stop by when my door is open (blinds will be open). My schedule does vary from day-to-day due to other responsibilities but I am most likely to be in the office MWF. To make sure that I am in my office, please make an appointment.

E-mail: david.doerfert@ttu.edu -- I'm pretty good about responding to emails within 24 hours.

However, I will not respond to emails over the weekend. I reserve that time for my family.

Phone: (806) 742-2816; Fax: (806) 742-2880

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examines potential risk and crisis communications scenarios in agriculture and the relevant theories, models, and processes to address these types of situations effectively.

COURSE PURPOSE

The course introduces students to the theories and strategies that have been used to in risk and crisis communications. To better understand this content, students will examine the various risk and crisis situations that have occurred in agriculture and natural resources. One instructional goal of the course is to help students develop the critical thinking skills necessary to address a potential agriculture risk or crisis through an effective communication strategy. This course is required for all students seeking the Master's of Agricultural Communications degree. It is a potential elective for other graduate students seeking to understand the crisis communication process.

EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES & METHODS FOR ASSESSING THOSE OUTCOMES

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

1. Understand and be able to discuss an integrated framework for approaching crisis management and risk communication in agriculture and natural resources.

Methods for Assessing this Expected Learning Outcome: all assignments.

2. Be able to critically analyze agriculture crises and risks and recommend appropriate practices for potential future events.

Methods for Assessing this Expected Learning Outcome: (1) class participation activities, (2) case study discussions, (3) Second Life simulation assignments and personal reflections, and (4) crisis plan development.

COURSE INFORMATION

Location

All class sessions will be held in the Agricultural Education & Communications Building, Room 107 unless otherwise notified by the instructor.

Required Textbooks

Coombs, W. T. (2011). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (3rd ed.). Los Angeles: Sage Publications

Coombs, W. T. (2014). *Applied Crisis Communication and Crisis Management: Cases and Exercises*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications

Recorded Class Sessions

For the benefit of our distance students as well as for those who miss a class session, recordings will be available on each week's content approximately 24 hours after the class session via MediaSite.

Web-Assisted Instruction

We will be using TTU's web-support instructional system Blackboard Learn 9.1 for this course (<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/lms/>).

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS/DESCRIPTION OF HOW GRADES ARE DETERMINED

All students (distance and resident) will be assessed on the following assignments during the course.

1. Case Study Discussions: (220 total points (11 @ 20 points each)). Eleven case studies will be introduced and discussed during the semester. The first two case studies will be discussed via Blackboard's discussion board feature. These two were produced by students in a previous semester and will also serve as an example of what is expected for the case study assignment. Points for these two case studies will be awarded based on the extent of discussion board participation and contribution of new material to the discussion.

The remaining nine case studies will be from the required textbook *Applied Crisis Communication and Crisis Management: Cases and Exercises*. The instructor will post a question list for each case study on Blackboard one week prior to its due date. Students are to respond to the questions creating a WORD document that is to be uploaded to Blackboard by the specified deadline. Points will be awarded based on completeness of response including the ability to correctly apply course and supplemental content to the case study.

2. Private Journal: (150 points (10 points per week)). The expectation is that you write in Blackboard's personal journal at least once a week about course related topics including your personal experiences and course related learning. You may reflect on the readings or on something you read outside of class but it must be relevant to the course.
3. Mid-Term and Final Exam: (200 points (100 points per exam)). A mid-term exam (after 6th class session) and a final exam at the conclusion of the course will be given via Blackboard. You will have three hours to complete each open-notes exam. As this will be open-note exam, I am expecting that everyone will work independently. Those found to have collaborated on the exam will receive an automatic "0" for the exam grade.
4. Case Study Development (250 points)
 - 25 points for first draft of case study and instructor guide
 - 150 points for final submission of case study and 50 points for the instructor guide
 - 25 points for presentation

A case is a factual description of events that happened at some point in the past. For the purpose of this class, cases are designed to provide a basis for analysis of the decision-making process under a variety of conditions. As such, to be effective, the case must provide sufficient

material concerning the situation and the environment surrounding the event to help the reader understand what transpired and then determine what, if anything, could have been done to improve the eventual outcome.

Students will work in teams of two on creating a case study on a past crisis in agriculture or natural resources. While the number of topics will be dependent upon final course enrollment, past topics have included:

- Monsanto's rbST launch in 1995 and Milk Consumption
- Animal Waste Contamination of North Carolina's Water Supplies during 2002 Hurricane
- *E. coli* poisoning and the California Beef Industry (2008)
- Orange Juice & Salmonella (1999)
- Wendy's "Finger in the Chili" (2005)

Students will sign up for their topic using Blackboard's Group Assignment tool beginning on September 18th. Each group will create the case study and an "instructor's manual" for their topic (more details including a grading rubric will be shared during the Sept. 11th class). Students will submit a first draft (1-3 pages) on October 23rd with the final version due by noon on Dec. 4th.

Grading Scale

A	762-820 points	C	598-630
A-	738-761	C-	574-597
B+	713-737	D+	549-573
B	680-712	D	516-548
B-	656-679	D-	492-515
C+	631-655	F	Less than 492 points

COURSE POLICIES

Late Assignments

Late assignments will not be accepted, and students who turn in late assignments will receive a score of "0" for that assignment. Assignments are considered "on time" as long as they are uploaded to Blackboard on or before the day they are due. If an emergency arises that will require students to turn an assignment in late, or if a student will be absent for a university-approved function, they will be required to submit documentary proof of the emergency or the university function. If an emergency does arise, students should call the instructor at (806-742-2816), immediately. For absences related to university functions, students must work with instructor at least two weeks in advance to create a plan for completion of missed work.

Class Attendance and Absences

Class attendance is critical. Whether attending in resident or at a distance, your participation is considered important and is reflected in the student evaluation of this class. However, some absences are unavoidable. The following are the guidelines for absences at Texas Tech University and this course.

Absence due to extended illness, injury, or immediate family deaths - The Center for Campus Life is responsible for notifying the campus community of student illnesses, immediate family deaths and/or student death. Generally, in cases of student illness or immediate family deaths, the notification to the appropriate campus community members occur when a student is absent from class for four (4) consecutive days with appropriate verification. It is always the student's responsibility for missed class assignments and/or course work during their absence. The student is encouraged to contact the faculty member immediately regarding the absences and to provide verification afterwards. The notification from the Center for Campus Life does not excuse a student from class, assignments, and/or any other course requirements. The notification is provided as a courtesy. In case of an illness that will require absence

from class for more than one week, the student should notify his or her academic dean who will inform all of the student's instructors. (*The Texas Tech University Catalog, 2013-14*, pp. 62)

Absence due to religious observance - *The 2013-14 Texas Tech University Catalog* states that a student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day will be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence (p. 62). The student is expected to provide written notification to the instructor of each class that the student will be absent for a religious holy day.

Absence due to officially approved trips – *The 2013-14 Texas Tech University Catalog* states that the person responsible for a student missing class due to a trip (e.g. department chair, director, coach) should notify the instructors of the departure and return schedule in advance of the trip. The student may not be penalized and is responsible for the material missed (pp. 62). For this course, students are expected to work with instructor at least two weeks in advance of the absence to create a plan for completion of missed work. Due dates for assignments may be adjusted if discussed with the professor in advance.

Grade Dispute Policy

At some point in this course, you may disagree with a grade you receive on an assignment. In cases such as this, you should schedule a meeting with Dr. Doerfert to discuss your concerns. Here are some guidelines to follow in the case of a grade dispute:

- Before scheduling a meeting to discuss your concerns, review the assignment guidelines so that you fully understand the requirements of the assignment. Bring your graded assignment to the meeting you schedule.
- If you still have a concern about the grade you received, e-mail me at david.doerfert@ttu.edu to schedule a meeting. You must do this within seven (7) days of receiving the assignment back. After seven days, no assignment grades will be considered for change.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic Misconduct

It is the aim of the faculty of Texas Tech University to foster a spirit of complete honesty and a high standard of integrity. The attempt of students to present as their own any work that they have not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense and renders the offenders liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension. Additional information can be found in *The 2013-14 Texas Tech University Catalog* beginning on page 64-65.

Cheating: Dishonesty on examinations and quizzes or on written assignments, illegal possession of examinations, the use of unauthorized notes during an examination or quiz, obtaining information during an examination from the examination paper or otherwise from another student, assisting others to cheat, alteration of grade records, illegal entry to or unauthorized presence in an office are instances of cheating.

Plagiarism: Offering the work of another as one's own, without proper acknowledgment, is plagiarism; therefore any student who fails to give credit for quotations or an essentially identical expression of material taken from books, encyclopedias, magazines, and other reference works, or from the themes, reports, or other writings of a fellow student, is guilty of plagiarism.

Software Use: Students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.

As a result of completing registration at Texas Tech University, every student agrees to the following statement: "I understand that Texas Tech University expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty, and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University."

Civility in the Classroom

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. In order to ensure that all students have an opportunity to gain from time spent in the class, unless otherwise approved by the instructor, students are prohibited from using cellular phones, text messaging devices, pagers or engaging in any other form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result in, minimally, a request to leave class.

Students with Disabilities

Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or 806-742-2405.

Office of the Ombudsman

The Office of the Ombudsman is available to assist students with any conflict or problem that has to do with being a student at Texas Tech University. You may visit the Ombudsman in Room 232E of the Student Union Building or call 742-SAFE.

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ACOM 5304 Course Calendar – Fall 2013

Week	Lecture Topics	Chapters to Read	Assignments & Assessments
1 (Aug. 28)	Agriculture Crisis Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Overview & Expectations • Importance of Crisis Management • Ag Crisis Management Framework Introduction 	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weekly journal entries begin • OJ case study discussion opens on Blackboard
2 (Sept. 4)	The Crisis Management Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theories, Models, and Approaches • Core Principles of Risk & Crisis Communication • Challenges of Communicating Science & Agriculture 	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OJ case study discussion closes prior to start of Week 2 class) • Wendy's case study discussion opens on Blackboard
3 (Sept. 11)	The Challenge of Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Connectedness of Agriculture • Sources of Crises & their Warning Signs • Laws That Influence Crisis Management 	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy's case study discussion closes prior to start of Week 3 class
4 (Sept. 18)	Leading During a Crisis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing During Uncertainty • Ethical Issues • Use of the Precautionary Principle 	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nestlé/Tetra Pak case study (Ch. 7) response due
5 (Sept. 25)	Stage 1: Prevention <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact Assessment—Assessing Vulnerabilities • The Importance of Understanding Audiences 	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hershey case study (Ch. 4) response due
6 (Oct. 2)	Taking Preventive Measures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Rumors and Rumor Transmission • Reducing Your Risk for a Potential Crisis 	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BP Texas City case study (Ch. 11) response due • Mid-term Exam opens after class
7 (Oct. 9)	Stage 2: Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting & Training a Crisis Management Team • The Spokesperson 	5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cadbury case study (Ch. 5) response due
8 (Oct. 16 <i>recorded</i>)	Crisis Management Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic Approaches and Planning • Developing a Crisis Management Plan 	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peanut Butter case study (Ch. 6) response due
9 (Oct. 23)	Finalizing a Plan and Conducting Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparation of the Crisis Communications System • Dealing with Death and Injury 	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jensen Farms case study (Ch. 14) response due • Draft of case study due
10 (Oct. 30)	Stage 3: Recognition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information Gathering & Processing • Selling the Crisis to the Bosses 	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sparboe Farms/McDonald's case study (Ch. 10) response due
11 (Nov. 6 <i>recorded</i>)	Stage 4: Response <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form of the Crisis Response • Content of the Crisis Response • Crisis Response Strategies 	8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenpeace case study (Ch. 19) response due
12 (Nov. 13)	Stage 5: Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Importance of Learning from a Crisis • Post-crisis Actions 	9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chick-fil-A case study (Ch. 15) response due
13 (Nov. 20)	Future Directions for Crisis Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Observations & Lessons Learned • New & Emerging Technologies: Opportunities and Challenges 	Epilogue	
14 (Nov. 27)	Thanksgiving Break (No class)		
15 (Dec. 4)	Presentation of Developed Case Studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course wrap-up activities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case study with instructor guide must be uploaded prior to the start of class. • Final exam opens after class