**CRISIS AND EMERGENCY RISK COMMUNICATION**

COM 3404  
Hours and Credits: 3 credits (3 hours)

Pathways: World Cultures and Global Issues

**Course/Catalog Description**: Effective communication is critical in the event of a crises, 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.

**Introduction:** Poverty, climate change, industrial and 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 hurricanes, tornados, floods, earthquakes or terrorism. Governments, cities, communities, organizations and families need plan ahead before the adverse event. Without a communication strategy in place responders will lack the capacity to effectively respond. This course will help to prepare students seeking careers in public health or emergency management agencies to plan, implement and evaluate risk communication. The curriculum is based on Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) principles, which are used by federal, state and local public health professionals/ public information officers to prepare for probable outcomes in the event of disasters and emergencies. In this course students prepare a crisis and emergency risk communication plan, based on lessons from previous global health emergencies.

**Textbook:**

[CDC’s Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication (CERC) manual](https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/manual/index.asp)

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 (Bb) by instructor and students.

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

**LEARNING OUTCOMES**

**General Education Learning Outcomes:**  
Upon the successful completion of this course, students are expected to:

* 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.

**Flexible Core Learning Outcomes (World Cultures and Global Issues):**

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| Learning Outcomes | Assessment Methods |
| Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring world cultures or global issues, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, economics, ethnic studies, foreign languages (building upon previous language acquisition), geography, history, political science, sociology, and world literature. | Assignments are designed for students to make discoveries of fundamental issues and ideas in Communication Studies, related to the informative, persuasive and affective dimensions of risk and emergency response communication. Students are assessed for their ability to apply insights to solve communication problems, and, through media monitoring, describe the “communication environment” surrounding global events. |
| Analyze culture, globalization, or global cultural diversity, and describe an event or process from more than one point of view. | The globally focused case study approach requires students to interpret the influence of linguistic, cultural and ethnic differences on events, making comparisons cross-culturally. |
| Analyze the historical development of one or more non-U.S. societies. | Readings show the influence of historical and social factors on global crises. For example, how international trade agreements affect public health infrastructure in Haiti. |
| Analyze and discuss the role that race, ethnicity, class, gender, language, sexual orientation, belief, or other forms of social differentiation play in world cultures or societies. | Discussion prompts, case studies and final papers are evaluated for their relevance to serving the information needs of at-risk populations, historically underserved by public health interventions, due to poverty, language barriers and discrimination. |

**Course Intended Learning Outcomes:**

* 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.
* Define core concepts and principles for creating a crisis communication plan.
* 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.
* Global opportunities for multilingual health professionals in emergency response.

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Full descriptions and instructions for assignments can be 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 closelyto 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 15 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 is a fun and educational activity that simulates decision making under conditions of uncertainty amidst time constraints.

**Media Monitoring Reports:**   
This semester each student will produce two “case studies” of the news media surrounding an historical event. These short papers use media monitoring techniques to investigate communication issues. These papers follow a problem/solution organizational pattern, as students identify communication problems that contributed to the crisis and posit work-arounds and solutions using other examples. Each report is two to four pages and must contain citations, to be uploaded to Blackboard. Key findings will be informally presented and discussed in class.

**Blackboard Discussion Board:**

Each week you post, at minimum, one Discussion Thread (and three responses to other’s threads) on the Blackboard Discussion Board. Your thread will be in response to weekly questions posed by the instructor, and you should incorporate examples from the weekly readings.

**FINAL ASSIGNMENTS (7-10 page paper and 7-10 minute oral presentation)**

We choose final assignments about mid-term and work on them in the second half of the course. The final project is a chance to apply concepts and procedures studied. All final assignments require research and citations. Each choice requires a 7-10 page typed (double-spaced) final paper (to be uploaded on Blackboard) as well as a 7 to 10 minutes in-class oral presentation with charts, graphs and other visual aids. You have a choice for your final assignment. Please choose only one of the three choices below:

1. Communication Surveillance Report (CSR):This is similar to the Media Monitoring Report but goes into greater depth 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 collects metrics of news stories and social media mentions, highlighting words and themes. Your report should be closely modelled after sample CSRs provided. For the presentation, your findings are presented in charts and graphs. I also encourage you to pose a few discussion questions to the class. (7-10 page paper and 7-10 minute oral presentation)
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 your Media Monitoring Report, focusing on how public health and other officials adhered to CERC Principles. In the event that incident commanders fell short in applying the principles, what are your strategies for meeting them more effectively? Your presentation should include a succinct summary of the key figures and leader in this event, and a critique or evaluative response. I also encourage you to pose a few discussion questions to the class. (7-10 page paper and 7-10 minute oral presentation)
3. Design an Emergency Response Plan: This assignment gives you the chance carefully plan for an emergency for your organization or your family. Students address risks to health and safety using the OSHA Emergency Action Plan [checklist](https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/checklists/eap.html) and other resources. Your paper and presentation should be staged, step-by-step. Try to anticipate and address other contingencies in the event of a disaster or emergency. I also encourage you to pose a few discussion questions to the class. (7-10 page paper and 7-10 minute oral presentation)

NOTE: a one-page description of your final is due mid-term.

Grading:

Simulated Crisis Response 15%

Media Monitoring Reports 15% each = 30%

Blackboard Discussion Board 15%

Final Assignment, your choice of EITHER

* Communication Surveillance Report
* Applying CERC Principles
* Emergency Response Plan
* Student’s Choice

Paper/Oral Presentation 15%, 15% =30%

Class Participation \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ 10%

Total 100%

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

(NOTE: May be subject to change. All changes announced on Blackboard)

**Week 1: Introduction to Emergency Risk Communication**

* Introduction to global “Risk Society” and “Disaster Capitalism”
* Definitions of Crisis and Emergency Risk communication concepts
* Types of events, and factors that increase risks to health and safety

**Week 2: How People Handle a Crisis**

* Poverty /affluence as determining factors in health and safety outcomes
* The affective contagion of an emergency
* Risk perception and behaviors

**Week 3: Understanding the Communication Environment**

* Communication Surveillance and the information ecosystem
* Media monitoring for traditional and new media
* Combatting errors, “fake news” and misperceptions

**Week 4: Media Monitoring and Communication Channels**

* Communication channel attributes, and why mobile technology is a game changer
* Media monitoring techniques
* Means of communicating in the event of channel disruption

**Week 5: Crisis Communication Planning**

* Anticipating crisis related to climate change and globalization
* OSHA Emergency Action Plan Checklist
* Phases of a crisis in emergency events

**Week 6: The Role of Spokespersons**

* Incident command structure
* Public Information Officers
* International differences in emergency response

First Media Monitoring Report due

**Week 7: Simulated Crisis Response Assignment**

* Simulated Crisis Response with assigned roles, culminating in a press conference

One-page description of your final project due

**Week 8: Response Hierarchy, Messages and Audiences**

* Identifying leadership roles during an emergency
* Learning about audiences
* Making facts work in your message and handling uncertainty

Second Media Monitoring Report due

**Week 9: Engaging the Community**

* Communities, cultures and language differences during an emergency
* Types of community relationships
* Community engagement during each phase of a crisis

**Week 10: Environmental Disaster Communication Challenges**

* Learning from hurricanes, tornados and floods
* How globalization can facilitate health risks of natural disasters
* Climate change and the challenge for science communication

**Week 11: Terrorism and Gun Violence: Communication Challenges**

* Communicating during chemical, biological, nuclear, or explosive (CBRNE) events.
* Understanding the Strategic National Stockpile (SNS).
* Considering the social amplification/ attenuation of risk.

**Week 12: Human Resources, Law and Policy**

* Burnout and resilience; surge staffing
* Inter-agency communication
* Emergency powers for state and federal agencies

**Week 13:** Final Presentations

**Week 14**: Final Presentations. **Week 15**: Final Presentations.Final Projects due

**CLASS REQUIREMENTS**

**Literacy Requirement**  
This course requires strong, college-level English literacy skills. Students not meeting these basic literacy requirements will be asked to reconsider this course. Writing assistance is available at the Atrium Learning Center, Atrium G18, 718-260-5874

**Technology Requirements and Support**  
This class requires the use of Microsoft Office Software. A basic familiarity with Microsoft Word and Microsoft PowerPoint is required. This normally $200 software package is available to you for FREE as a CUNY student. See the instructions on Blackboard. **iTec** provides assistance for technology needs: Room G601 (718)-254-8565. Email: itec@citytech.cuny.edu  
Website: <http://websupport1.citytech.cuny.edu/index.html>

**CLASS POLICIES**

**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.

**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 Accessibilityin 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.

**References**

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