

## Crisis Communication

CMPR6201

### Course Outline

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**Description:** Protect and maintain the reputation and image of your organization during a sudden emergency or ongoing issue. This course teaches you the most effective strategies and techniques for dealing with the media and key stakeholders in a time of crisis. You will learn how to build a crisis communication plan to allow you to respond quickly and effectively when a crisis hits, and will take part in crisis response scenarios to test your new skills.

**Course Goals:** To provide communication professionals and others interested in the world of reputation management an understanding of how crises unfold, how to prepare to respond when crisis hits, and how to work to stop the damage that often accompanies poor communication in a crisis.

**Course Objectives:** At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Prepare yourself to lead and organize a communication plan and response to deal quickly and effectively with a reputational crisis.
- Learn the critical elements of communication planning that can be developed now, to allow for greater success when an inevitable crisis strikes.
- Understand the best practice approaches to communicate with media, the public and stakeholders under the added stress that crises introduce.

**Texts:** all materials will be provided.

### Attendance Requirements:

Students are required to attend 100% of class time in order to receive a completion for this course. A grade report can be printed from myWCS.

### Code of Student Conduct:

The purpose of the Code of Student Conduct is to define the general standard of conduct expected of students registered at Western University, provide examples of behaviour that constitutes a breach of this standard of conduct, provide examples of sanctions that may be imposed, and set out the disciplinary procedures that the University will follow. For the complete Code of Student Conduct: <http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/board/code.pdf>.

### Course Schedule:

#### Day 1

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1. **Introduction & Course Outcome Expectations**
2. **Crisis Communications Basics**
  - Defining a Crisis
  - Issues vs. Crisis

Emergencies vs. Crisis  
Definitive Case Studies

- 3. Role of the Communicator**
  - Audiences & Channels to reach them
  - Authentic vs. Closed Approach
  - Review Memorable Crises – High Level
- 4. Crisis Communication Planning**
  - Preparing for Potential Crisis
  - How to Build a Crisis Communication Plan
  - Putting Plan into action
- 5. Evolving Realities of Social Media in a Crisis**
  - Individuals as media outlets, commentators
  - Why Response Time Shrinks, and Rumours Explode
  - Understanding How to Utilize Various Platforms
- 6. Key Message Design**
  - Key Message design and delivery
  - Bridging techniques and rationale
  - Anticipating flow of Questions, Requests
- 8. Class Case Study**
  - Students assess a Crisis Scenario.

## Day 2

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- 1. Managing Response**
  - Relating to Media and other stakeholders
  - Developing key messages for various audiences
  - Framing Narrative and Responses / Re-Framing after initial delivery
- 2. Who delivers the news on your behalf?**
  - Identifying spokespeople
  - Training candidates
  - Prep/Offer spokespeople for particular incidents
- 3. Apply Learning to Other Crisis**
  - Examine various communication products to be considered in crisis response
  - Understand aspects of Crisis Plans, and implementation
  - Determine response; deal with complications, developments
- 4. Defining Success in Managing Crises**
  - Planning, Execution, Being Heard
- 5. Mopping Up and Measurement, Results**
  - Determining when Crisis has passed
  - Measuring Your Response
  - Repairing, Rebuilding, Revitalizing your Organization
- 6. Case Studies in Breakout Groups**

# Western Continuing Studies

In groups, students will consider a Crisis case and then present a communication response to class

## **7. Presentation of Group Case Studies**

Instructor and classmates evaluate the effectiveness of each

## **8. Review and Wrap up**

Review Principles and Best Practices

Review unanswered questions, concerns

Review resources and resources of ongoing value

### **Evaluation Method:**

As part of the course/instructor evaluation, a survey will be sent to you electronically by Continuing Studies. You will be asked the following questions. Please consider these throughout the course.

1. How would you rate your overall experience?
2. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements:
  - a. The course content was relevant and valuable.
  - b. The instructor conducted class sessions in an organized, well-planned manner.
  - c. The instructor explained concepts clearly.
  - d. The instructor displayed enthusiasm and energy in conducting class sessions.
  - e. The instructor made me feel comfortable in the learning environment.
  - f. The instructor encouraged my participation and interaction.