Crisis Communications and Reputation Management
(MGB 402-001)
Sunday, October 7 and 28, 2012
9 a.m. – noon, 2 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Bay Area Campus Teaching Facility
Bishop Ranch 15, Suite 190
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Room 1502

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Course Description
This course is intended to provide you with an understanding of the framework and tools necessary to successfully address communications and reputation management tasks in a variety of crisis situations. Through discussion and application of theory, as well as analysis of case studies, you’ll be asked to think strategically, make recommendations to address crisis-related challenges, and develop robust, proactive plans to assist organizations in this arena. In short, you’ll gain the expertise and confidence needed to maneuver through myriad potential crisis situations today’s organizations and individuals will encounter.

Learning Objectives
By the end of this course, students should be able to:

• Identify and apply crisis prevention strategies to different situations in various industries;
• Isolate and describe crisis planning and preparation measures;
• Differentiate between different crisis types;
• Assess the appropriateness of a crisis response;
• Assess the information needs and resources of a crisis situation;
• Identify and assess the application of social media tools in different stages of crisis communications and reputation management; and
• Critically analyze previous crisis situations in established organizations.
**Required Text**


As you’ll note below, readings have been assigned from this book for each of the two class sessions. The Fearn-Banks text has been supplemented by other articles included in the Textpak.

**Assignments**

In addition to the aforementioned readings, a range of individual written assignments and small group presentations will be completed throughout the course. These assignments and class participation will in total count for 25% of the final course assessment. The instructor will explain these assignments in class.

A take-home final exam will count for 75% of the final course assessment. You’ll select a major individual or organizational crisis (one not covered in the assigned reading) and answer the following questions. Your response should range from 1,500 to 2,000 words (five to seven pages, doubled space, in Microsoft Word). You can choose to answer the questions individually, or in the form of an essay; it’s your choice. Among the organizational crises you may choose to consider are:

- Bhopal disaster (1984)
- The Catholic Church sex abuse incidents (starting in the 1980s)
- Mattel toy recalls (2007)
- BP oil spill (2010)
- Toyota vehicle recalls (2009-2010)
- Penn State Sandusky child sex abuse scandal (starting in the 1990s)

The instructor will provide a sign up list in class so you can identify which crisis you’ll be covering in your final exam.

This assignment is due no later than Wednesday, October 31 at 9 p.m. PDT.

**Take-Home Final Questions**

* What happened that prompted the crisis you’ve selected? Provide a brief overview of the chain of events that precipitated the crisis, what happened during it, and how it concluded (which may consist of an update on most recent crisis-related developments).

* How were the crisis communications theories covered in the course reflected in the particular crisis?

* Can you identify the five stages of a crisis outlined in the course? Please describe each stage in relation to the crisis you have selected for analysis.

* What issues, reputation, and/or risk management efforts, if any, did the organization(s) pursue by way of crisis prevention? How did the crisis itself highlight strengths or limitations of these efforts (or the absence of them)?
* Assess the response of the organization to the specific crisis you’re considering. What tools (e.g., social media) and techniques were used? Which of these tools/techniques were effective in terms of the overall crisis communication and reputation management efforts? Why?

* How did crisis response tools and techniques employed in your case study come up short? Why? What might the organization you studied have done instead?

* In your opinion, what distinguishes this crisis from others we have discussed in class? What makes it like them?

* What about this crisis in particular informs your overall understanding of crisis communication and reputation management?

* (Optional) What did you learn from your work on this crisis that might help you contribute to a crisis communications plan for your organization?

**Grading**
Students in this class will receive a rating of either “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory” depending upon their completion of required assignments. Letter grades will not be given.

**Plagiarism Policy**
Please review “Avoiding Plagiarism: Mastering the Art of Scholarship” on pp. 22-23 of the student handbook (http://students.gsm.ucdavis.edu/bamba/Handouts/ba_handbook.pdf) so you are familiar with the university’s requirements.

**Classroom Procedure**
Class time will consist of instructor presentations, discussions, individual and group work, and other activities. Food and beverages are allowed in the classroom. Please discard cups and/or cans properly when you have finished using them. As a courtesy to the instructor and your fellow students, please turn off cell phones and other devices not related to your work in this class. Laptop computers are permitted.

**Contacting the Instructor**
E-mail is the preferred way to contact the instructor. He checks his account seven days a week.

**Covered, and Assignments Due**
Students are expected to have completed “Assignments Due” by the time they arrive for class on the date indicated. Time also will be provided in class for students to polish their work. The instructor will provide an agenda for each class session listing topics to be covered along with a reminder of assignments due by the next time the class meets.

**Sunday, October 7**

**Morning Session**

**Topics:**
- Course Overview
- Crisis Communications Overview
- Crisis Prevention
- Crisis Planning and Preparation
Assignments Due: Read:
• Chapters 1-3, 15, Appendices A-C in Fearn-Banks
• “Merrill Lynch: Corporate Apologia and Business Fraud” (in Textpak)
• “Must accidents happen? Lessons from high-reliability organizations” (in Textpak)
• “Crisis communications preparedness among U.S. organizations: Activities and assessments by public relations practitioners” (in Textpak)
• “School emergency planning: Back to the basics” (in Textpak)

Afternoon Session
Topics: Crisis Response
Social Media, Rumors, and Crisis Communications

Assignments Due: Read:
• Chapters 4-6 in Fearn-Banks
• “Integrating public relations and legal responses during a crisis: the case of Odwalla” (in Textpak)

Answer the following questions in an essay not to exceed 350 words:
• Would a crisis communications plan have helped any of the companies mentioned in Chapter 6 of Fearn-Banks? Why or why not? You are encouraged to include at least two of the companies in your essay, and to compare and contrast their responses to their respective crises.

Note that time will be provided for you to work on this written assignment in class, so you are not expected to arrive with a completed essay.

Sunday, October 28

Morning Session
Topics: Crisis Communications and Reputation Management Case Studies

Assignments Due: Read:
• Chapters 7 and 9-14 in Fearn-Banks
• “Exxon and the Valdez accident: A failure in crisis communications” (Textpak)

Afternoon Session
Topics: Crisis simulation
Next steps in your study and practice of crisis communications and reputation management