

CMST 3350 – Risk Communication

Online - Asynchronous

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**In-Person Student Hours: Tuesdays 9:30-10:30 a.m. Wednesdays noon – 2 p.m. and
by appointment**

Virtual Student Hour for this class only: Wednesdays 4:15-5:15 at this link:

<https://uttyler.zoom.us/j/81146297222?pwd=zirm7DZbicowad5lMWrgGtiln573UH>

Course Description: This course examines what constitutes “risk,” risk communication theories, and the practice of risk communication in various settings. Risk communication plans and strategies will be evaluated as related to various target audiences, audience assessment and perception of risks, and the factors that influence whether people take action to protect themselves against risks and the role communication plays in these processes. Prerequisite: CMST 1315

Student Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

1. Articulate the concepts of risk, risk communication, and risk perception, including why some people may view certain phenomena as risky while others do not.
2. Identify the defining features of risk communication (versus that of crisis communication, for example).
3. State the various individual, social and cognitive factors (based on theory) that influence individual decisions to engage in risky behaviors or take actions to avoid risks.
4. Describe the role of communication across the various phases of risk management and articulate theory-based “best practices” for each phase.
5. Develop a comprehensive, theory-based risk communication plan that provides a communication and messaging strategy to inform and educate the public about an actual risk in society.
6. State how the principles of communication can be used to influence individuals to consider and/or make certain decisions or choices to reduce their risk.
7. Analyze how various channels of communication influence risk, risk communication and risk perception based on key theories, research and case study examples.

Course Requirements

Readings as assigned (provided on Canvas)

Evaluation and Grade Calculation

Group	Percent
Assignments	70%
Case Study Paper	10%
Final Project	20%
	Total = 100%

Percent	Letter Grade
90% - 100%	A
80% - 89%	B
70-79%	C
60-69%	D
59% and below	F

Assignments Overview

- a. **Assignments (70%)** – SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7 - During the semester, you'll complete a variety of discussions and knowledge check assignments. The discussions' purpose is to give you an opportunity to explore personal thoughts and understanding of the class material and compare/contrast your thoughts to those of your classmates. Each discussion post and responses have requirements: minimum length, sources documented, and relevance to the posted topic. The knowledge checks give you a final opportunity to review the weekly material and test understanding before moving to the next topic.
- b. **Case Study Paper (10%)** – SLOs 2, 4, 6, 7 – You get to complete a case study project that combines theoretical practice and research. For the case study, you'll research and analyze an organization's risk communication practices – what the practices are, the effectiveness, improvement suggestions, etc.
- c. **Final project (20%)** – SLOs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 – You'll create a risk communication plan for an organization. You may utilize real-world risk communication plans for inspiration, but your plan must be unique to a specific situation the organization may face and must be unique from existing risk communication plans. You must select a different organization than the one used in your case study paper. In addition to the risk communication plan, you'll write a short, reflective paper over the plan and participate in a discussion post assignment to share your plan with classmates.

Classroom Policies and Expectations

- A. **Work hard** - learning requires constant reading, researching, thinking, discussing and working with your classmates and me. Everyone has something important to contribute. My job is to present new information and prepare a climate in which you can contribute your own special knowledge. Your job is to be prepared to contribute.
- B. **Participate** – you must be an active part of the course to succeed.
- C. **Treat each other with respect and display common classroom courtesies.**
You are responsible for your attitude and how you treat others. That means no name calling, fighting, belittling another for differing opinions, etc. Act like adults, show respect, and challenge yourself and each other to learn/understand opinions you may not agree with. If you are not treating individuals with respect or are causing a distraction, you will be asked to leave the discussion and could fail the course.
- D. **Know how grading works** – The grading process begins with the assumption that the work is good, which earns a grade within the range of a “B.” To earn an A, you must show exceptional understanding of the material, utilizing additional sources, examples and original thought. This means going beyond stating the obvious, the simple answer, or what Google says.
Poor organization, not following assignment instructions, incorrect grammar/spelling/punctuation, lack of depth and thought, failing to illustrate an understanding of the material, etc. will result in your grade being lowered.
- E. **Check Canvas and email** – Canvas is where you’ll see assignments and readings, present feedback and communicate with your classmates. I expect you to check both daily and stay aware of what is coming up.
Tip: Download the Canvas app and adjust the settings to get notifications.
- F. **Communicate** - If you have a problem throughout the semester... getting an assignment in on time, understanding instructions, or anything I'm doing as a professor... please talk to me about it. I cannot help you or fix the problem if I am unaware of it.

Attendance Policy

This course is an asynchronous, online course. This means that we will not have scheduled meeting times each week, although I will hold an online (Zoom) hour each week to see you and answer questions.

You must log into Canvas throughout the semester. If you have not spent time on Canvas before the census date (**September 8**), your attendance will be recorded as “not attended.” Additionally, you are required to complete the course requirements according to the schedule provided. This includes watching/reading posted content and completing assignments by the listed due dates.

Assignment Policy

- A. Assignments have deadlines. It's your responsibility to utilize time in an effective manner to submit each assignment before the due date and time.
- B. Assignments and due dates may be changed at the instructor's discretion with fair notice to students.
- C. I don't accept assignments via email unless Canvas is the cause, and the email includes the assignment and a screenshot of the Canvas malfunction.
- D. Merely completing all assignments does not guarantee that you will pass the course. You must put forth effort and show an understanding of the material to earn a satisfactory grade.
- E. I will not accept screenshots of assignments. Unless otherwise indicated, all assignments must be typed, formatted to be a .DOC or .DOCX (*Pages, Google Drive, and other online word processors must be exported to this specific format*), and submitted via Canvas.
- F. You have SEVERAL ways to determine what will soon be due in class. It's your responsibility to be aware of deadlines and to stay on top of your assignments.
- G. All assignments will be checked by plagiarism and AI detection software.
- H. Plan to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty. Plagiarism and cheating are not tolerated. A student caught doing either will earn a "0" for that assignment, will be subject to academic and disciplinary action, and may fail the course.
 - i. In addition to UT Tyler's Student Conduct and Discipline policy, plagiarism/cheating includes:
 - 1. Self-plagiarism - the use of papers or other materials previously submitted elsewhere. Submit work created specifically for this class during this semester.
 - 2. AI generated content – the purpose of the assignments is to explore your understanding of the material on a deeper level, not have a computer explore it for you.
 - 3. Utilizing blank posts or random lines of text on discussion posts to gain access to the thread before creating your original post.
 - 4. Utilizing sources outside of Canvas to complete knowledge checks and quizzes.

UT Tyler AI Statement

- A. UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy.
- Students can use AI platforms to help prepare for assignments and projects (i.e., brainstorming) and to revise and edit their work (i.e., identify flaws in reasoning, spot confusing or underdeveloped paragraphs, or correct citations).
 - Students may not use AI to generate/create work for submission. All work submitted must come from the student. Assignments are designed so that students explore their own thoughts and understanding of the content, not the thoughts and understanding of the AI platform.
 - While AI can be a good starting point for research, the AI platform utilized does not count as an academic source because it can be incorrect or incomplete. It will not be accepted as a source for citing information.

Course schedule

Week	Weekly Topic	Required Readings	Assignments
1	Course Intro and What is Risk Communication?	Course syllabus	Due Sunday, 8/30 1. Syllabus quiz 2. Discussion: Introduction 3. Knowledge check #1
2	Theoretical Foundations	Risk in the Making	Due Sunday, 9/6 1. Knowledge check #2
3	Theoretical Foundations, Part Two	None	Due Sunday, 9/13 1. Discussion: Theory in Action 2. Knowledge check #3

4	Risk Perception	Risk Perception and Risk Characteristics	Due Sunday, 9/20 1. Knowledge check #4
5	Case Study Week	Case study overview	Due Sunday, 9/27 1. Case study
6	Message Development	Message Mapping, Risk, and Crisis Communication	Due Sunday, 10/4 1. Discussion: Case Study 2. Knowledge check #5
7	Ethics and Moral Emotion	Are Moral Emotions Key to Informed Risk Decisions?	Due Sunday, 10/11 1. Knowledge check #6
8	Audiences of Risk Communication	Audiences, Stakeholders, Publics	Due Sunday, 10/18 1. Discussion: Audience Analysis 2. Knowledge check #7
9	Final Project Work Week	Final project overview	Due Sunday, 10/25 1. Final project pitch
10	Media and Risk Communication	None	Due Sunday, 11/1 1. Knowledge check #8
11	Communicating Uncertainty and Building Trust	Self-chosen article	Due Sunday, 11/8 1. Discussion: Article Analysis 2. Knowledge check #9
12	Final Project Work Week	None	Due Sunday, 11/15 1. Final project check-in
13	Emergency Situations	Communicating in an Emergency	Due Sunday, 11/22 1. Discussion: The First 24 Hours 2. Knowledge check #10
14	Thanksgiving Break	None	None
15	Final project work week	None	Due Sunday, 12/6 1. Final Project
16	Finals Week	None	None