



5. Explain how consumers and risk communicators should be weary of “junk science.”
6. Read a number of case studies involving a variety of risks from both the health applied and organizational applied contexts.
7. Explain how and why lay and expert opinions about risks often differ.
8. Understand the historical nature of risk communication.
9. Understand how risk communicators can modify their messages and verbal/nonverbal delivery to have the most impact.
10. Develop and write risk and crisis communication plans.
11. Know some of the prominent social scientific theories that help researchers understand the risk communication process.
12. Understand the reasoning for the new push in public participation in the risk communication process.
13. Explain how a risk message can turn into a crisis message.
14. Understand the differences between risk and crisis messages.
15. Explain what can cause a crisis situation to occur.
16. Understand the best communicative strategies for handling a crisis situation.
17. Examine how 9-11 has transformed and changed both risk and crisis communication efforts in the United States.

**Important Websites:**

American Psychological Association’s Style website - <http://www.apastyle.org>

National Communication Association – <http://www.natcom.org>

Eastern Communication Association – <http://www.ecasite.com>

International Communication Association – <http://www.icaheadq.org/>

OU School of Communication Studies - <http://www.coms.ohiou.edu/>

Research Methods Knowledge Base - <http://trochim.human.cornell.edu/kb/>

James C. McCroskey, Ed. D. - <http://www.jamescmcroskey.com/>

Virginia P. Richmond, Ph.D. – <http://www.virginiapeckrichmond-phd.com>

Jason S. Wrench, Ed. D. - <http://www.roadspeakers.com/jwrench/>

## GRADING

GRADE	PERCENTAGE
A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	63-67
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

## ASSIGNMENTS

- Two Tests	Midterm _____(15)
	Final _____(20)
- Risk Analysis Paper	Paper _____(15)
- Risk Communication Campaign Paper	Paper _____(20)
- Crisis Communication Plan Analysis Paper	Paper _____(20)
- Class Participation & In-class activities	Activities _____(10)
- Extra Credit	_____ (X)
	<b>TOTAL</b> _____

- You should monitor your own grades. It is very helpful to know your standing in the course at any time during the quarter. Since the passing of the Buckley Amendment by Congress, I am not allowed to give grades over the phone or Internet. However, you may

inquire about your grades at anytime in person. Additionally, you may inquire in person about your final exam grade after you have received your quarter grade reports through the mail from the university.

## **Course Procedures**

### *Attendance*

Punctual attendance is expected at all class sessions, *especially* on test days. If you participate in University sponsored activities (e.g., intercollegiate sports), you must inform your instructor ***before*** you are absent. Ohio University policy regarding attendance will be followed. Students are responsible for all missed work.

### *Learning Activities*

In-class learning activities must be submitted on time and **cannot** be made up at all.

### *Makeup Tests*

If you miss a test, you must provide documentation to explain the absence in order to be considered for permission to make up the assignment. If you do not provide documentation for a missed test, you *cannot* make up the test. If you know that you will be forced to miss a test for school related reasons, please tell your instructor as far in advance as possible. Make up examinations will be individually scheduled between the instructor and the student on an as needed basis. Ultimately, makeup tests are at the discretion of the instructor.

### *Late Work*

Papers will be collected during the first ten minutes of class. After the first ten minutes, any work turned in is considered late. Late work will receive an automatic letter grade reduction for every school day the work is late (weekends are not counted). In other words, work that is more than four days late is automatically failing.

### *Course Readings*

All reading is expected to be done before you come to class. If it ever appears that reading is not being completed before class, the instructor reserves to the right to use quizzes as necessary to test reading.

*Extra Credit* is not guaranteed in this course, but if opportunities arise they will be announced in class.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Honesty and originality are expected in all the work you present in this class. Proper citation and documentation of others' work is required on all oral and written assignments. Plagiarism, cheating, or unethical behavior of any kind will not be tolerated.

### **AMERICAN WITH DISABILITIES ACT**

Any student, who, because of a disability, may require some special arrangements as prescribed by Ohio University Eastern in order to meet course requirements should contact me as soon as possible to make necessary accommodations. Accommodations will be made, but I must be aware of your needs in order to make proper accommodations.

## **Course Assignments**

### **Midterm Examination and Final Examination**

There is a midterm examination and a final in this course. Your midterm will occur halfway through the course and the final will occur during the final testing period. The final will cover all material discussed in this course. These tests will be a combination of multiple choice and short answer/essay tests.

### **COURSE PROJECT**

#### *Risk Analysis Paper*

The purpose of this paper is to take an actual hazard and perform a complete risk analysis of this hazard. You should pick a risk that is related to your communication track – health hazards for health communication and organizational hazards for organizational communication. Using any available research about your hazard, you will examine the following aspects of your hazard:

- 1) What is the rate of exposure of your hazard?
- 2) Who are the stakeholders involved in your risk?
- 3) What types of negative consequences occur as a result of exposure to the hazard?
- 4) What is the numerical quantification of the risk?
- 5) Are there any differing perceptions between experts and lay people about the hazard?
- 6) What is the expert mental model of the risk?
- 7) What is the common public mental model of the risk?
- 8) How do the models compare and contrast?

#### *Risk Communication Campaign Paper*

The purpose of this paper is to take the hazard you identified in the Risk Analysis Paper and develop a risk communication campaign. While the project is based on theoretical work conditions, your proposal for the campaign should be realistic and implementable. In other words, if you want to run television advertisements about your hazard, you should be able to supply me with a story board for the advertising campaign and a realistic budget for the campaign itself. If you want to use brochures, you will need to turn in sample brochure ideas along with a proposed budget. You can use any of the theoretical approaches to creating risk communication messages discussed in class.

### *Crisis Communication Plan Paper*

Part one of this assignment is to create a crisis communication plan for either a health organization or a traditional profit organization. Use the examples of the crisis communication plans discussed in class when creating your plan.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

Please note the schedule given on the first day of class is a tentative schedule and changes can be made at the instructor's/course administrator's discretion. To keep on top of any possible changes in the course schedule, regular attendance in class is necessary.

### **Tentative Schedule of Course Events**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Content to be Covered</b>	<b>Assignments Due</b>
Week 1	Unit One: Introduction to Risk Communication	
Week 2	Unit Two: Quantifying Risks	
Week 3	Unit Three: Public Perceptions of Risks	
Week 4	Unit Four: What is Risk Communication	
Week 5	Unit Five: Risk & Crisis Communication Plans	Risk Analysis Paper
Week 6	Unit Six: Public Participation in Risk Communication	Midterm Examination
Week 7	Unit Seven: Communication Variables that impact Risk Messages	Risk Communication Campaign Paper
Week 8	Unit Eight: Risk Communication Theory	
Week 9	Unit Nine: From a Risk to a Crisis	
Week 10	Unit Ten: Communicating Effectively During Emergencies	Crisis Communication Plan Paper Part 1
Week 11	Finals Week – Final Examination	Crisis Communication Plan Paper Part 2

## COMS 450 Course Readings List

### Unit One: Introduction to Risk Communication

Borouh, M. (1998). *Understanding risk analysis: A short guide for health, safety, and environmental policy making* (internet ed.). Washington, DC: American Chemical Society.

Grahm, J. D., & Rhomberg, L. (1996). How risks are identified and assessed. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 545, 15-24.

Lundgren & McMakin – Chapters 1 “Introduction”; 3 “Laws that Mandate Risk Communication”; & 5 “Ethical Issues”

### Unit Two: Quantifying Risks

#### READ THESE FIRST

Milroy, S. J. (2001). Lesson 4: Epidemiology in statistics. In *Junk science judo: Self-defense against health scares and scams* (pp. 82-100). Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

Milroy, S. J. (2001). Lesson 5: Size matters. In *Junk science judo: Self-defense against health scares and scams* (pp. 101-105). Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

Milroy, S. J. (2001). Lesson 6: Beat statistics with statistics. In *Junk science judo: Self-defense against health scares and scams* (pp. 107-114). Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

Milroy, S. J. (2001). Lesson 7: Big numbers mean big lies. In *Junk science judo: Self-defense against health scares and scams* (pp. 115-118). Washington, DC: Cato Institute.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Introduction. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 1-20). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Cellular phones and driving. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 70-75). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Mad cow disease. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 117-121). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Gaylor, D. W. (2004). Letter to the editor regarding mad cow hysteria. *Risk Analysis*, 23, 513.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Tobacco. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 139-148). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Biological weapons. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 186-194). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Breast implants. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 329-336). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Ropeik, D., & Gray, G. (2002). Medical errors. In *Risk! A practical guide for deciding what's really safe and what's really dangerous in the world around you* (pp. 376-383). New York: Houghton Mifflin.

### **READ THESE FIRST**

### **THEN READ ONE OF THE FOLLOWING**

Thompson, K. M., Rabouw, R. F., & Cook, R. M. (2001). The risk of groundling fatalities from unintentional airplane crashes. *Risk Analysis, 21*, 1025-1037.

Glass, R. J., Segui-Gomez, M., & Graham, J. D. (2000). Child passenger safety: Decisions about seating location, airbag exposure, and restraint use. *Risk Analysis, 20*, 521-527.

Nilsson, R. (2001). Environmental tobaccos smoke revisited: The reliability of the data used for risk assessment. *Risk Analysis, 21*, 737-760.

Toy, E. L., & Hammitt, J. K. (2003). Safety impacts of SUVs, vans, and pickup trucks in two-vehicle crashes. *Risk Analysis, 23*, 641-650.

### **Unit Three: Public Perceptions of Risks**

Sjöberg, L. Factors in risk perception. (2000). *Risk Analysis, 20*, 1-11.

Sjöberg, L., & Wåhlberg, A. A. (2002). Risk perception and new age beliefs. *Risk Analysis, 22*, 751-764.

Bouyer, M., Bagdassarian, S., Chaabanne, S., & Mullet, E. (2001). Personality correlates of risk perception. *Risk Analysis, 21*, 457-465.

Sandman, P. M. (1993). Risk = Hazard + Outrage. In *Responding to community outrage: Strategies for effective risk communication* (pp. 1-10). Fairfax, VA: American Industrial Hygiene Association.

Sandman, P. M. (1993). Components of Outrage. In *Responding to community outrage: Strategies for effective risk communication* (pp. 11-57). Fairfax, VA: American Industrial Hygiene Association.

## **Unit Four: What is Risk Communication**

Leiss, W. (1996). Three phases in the evolution of risk communication practice. *The Annals of the American Academy*, 545, 85-94.

Plough, A., & Krinsky, S. (1987). The emergence of risk communication studies: Social and political context. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, 12, 4-10.

Rowan, K. (1991). Goals, obstacles, and strategies in risk communication: A problem-solving approach to improving communication about risks. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 19, 300-329.

Lundgren & McMakin – Chapters 2 “Approaches to Risk Communication” and 4 “Constraints for Risk Communication”

## **Unit Five: Risk & Crisis Communication Plans**

Lundgren & McMakin – Part two “Planning the Risk Communication Effort” & Part three “Putting Risk Communication into Action”

Fearn-Banks, K. (2002). The crisis communications plan. In *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 22-40). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

## **Unit Six: Public Participation in Risk Communication**

Fiorino, D. J. (1990). Citizen participation and environmental risk: A survey of institutional mechanisms. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, 15, 226-243.

Laird, F. N. (1993). Participatory analysis, democracy, and technological decision making. *Science, Technology, and Human Values*, 18, 341-361.

Arvai, J. L. (2003). Using risk communication to disclose the outcome of a participatory decision-making process: Effects on the perceived acceptability of risk-polity decisions. *Risk Analysis*, 23, 281-289.

McComas, K. A. (2003). Citizen satisfaction with public meetings used for risk communication. *Journal for Applied Communication Research*, 31, 164-184.

## **Unit Seven: Communication Variables that impact Risk Messages**

Lundgren & McMakin –6 “Principles of Risk Communication”

Trumbo, C. W., & McComas, K. A. (2003). The function of credibility in information processing for risk perception. *Risk Analysis*, 23, 343-353.

Meijnders, A. L., Midden, C. J. H., & Wilke, H. A. M. (2001). Role of emotion in communication about CO<sub>2</sub> risks. *Risk Analysis*, *21*, 955-966.

Dorsey, A. M., Miller, K. I., Scherer, C. W. (1999). Communication, risk behavior, and perceptions of threat and efficacy: A test of a reciprocal model. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, *27*, 377-395.

### **Unit Eight: Risk Communication Theory**

Reyna, V. F., & Adam, M. B. (2003). Fuzzy trace theory, risk communication, and product labeling in sexually transmitted diseases. *Risk Analysis*, *23*, 1279-1287.

Chess, C. (2001). Organizational theory and the stages of risk communication. *Risk Analysis*, *21*, 188-179.

Neuwirth, K., Dunwoody, S., & Griffin, R. J. (2000). Protection motivation and risk communication. *Risk Analysis*, *20*, 188-179.

Scherer, C., & Cho, H. (2003). A social network contagion theory of risk perception. *Risk Analysis*, *23*, 261-267.

Witte, K., Meyer, G., & Martell, D. (2001). A brief analysis of empirical fear appeal studies. In *Effective health risk messages: A step-by-step guide* (pp. 135-145). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

### **Unit Nine: From a Risk to a Crisis**

Williams, D. E., & Olaniran, B. A. (1998). Expanding the crisis planning function: Introducing elements of risk communication to crisis communication practice. *Public Relations Review*, *24*, 387-400.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2002). Crisis makers. In *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 41-51). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fearn-Banks, K. (2002). Case: U.S. Postal Service and workplace violence. In *Crisis communications: A casebook approach* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 190-206). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Ogrizek, M., & Guillery, J. M. (1999). Communicating in a crisis. In *Communicating in crisis: A theoretical and practical guide to crisis management* (H. Kimball-Brooke & R. Z. Brooke, Trans.) (pp. 53-71). New York: De Gruyter. (Original work published 1997)

### **Unit Ten: Communicating Effectively During Emergencies**

Lundgren & McMakin – Part V – Bioterrorism & Other Emergencies

Slovic, P. Terrorism as hazard: A new species of trouble. *Risk Analysis*, *22*, 425-426.

Rogers, E. M. (2004). Diffusion of news of the September 11 terrorist attacks. In A. M. Noll (Ed.), *Crisis communications: Lessons from September 11* (pp. 17-30). New York: Rowan & Littlefield.

Rappoport, P. N., & Alleman, J. (2004). The Internet and the demand for news: Macro- and micro-evidence. In A. M. Noll (Ed.), *Crisis communications: Lessons from September 11* (pp. 149-166). New York: Rowan & Littlefield.