Study Plan 2024/25 (fall semester)

Course Description/Syllabus

Fall 2024	Crisis Communication
Course director	**Prof. Dr. Diana Ingenhoff,** University of Fribourg diana.ingenhoff@unifr.ch
Lecturer	**Prof. Dr. Philipp Bachmann,** Lucerne University of Applied Sciences and Arts, philipp.bachmann.01@hslu.ch
Assistant	**Roman Winkelhahn**, University of Fribourg, roman.winkelhahn@unifr.ch
Prerequisites	When registering to the course **you will be assigned to one out of six topics**. This topic must be prepared *before the course starts (ppt-presentation).* Also, a case study has to be solved during the course. For more details, please see learning methods below.
Objectives	- To give participants informed insights into the basic elements and terms of the interrelated concepts of issues and crisis management as part of a strategic communication strategy (identity, image, reputation, issues, crisis, issues management, crisis management, stakeholder theory, public sphere). - To learn more about crisis communication theories, reputation and issues management, the role of activists, internet contagion theory, stakeholder theory, business ethics and CSR, and the role of culture. - To give insights into the overall issues and crisis management processes and structures in today's companies, including challenges like the development of issues in social media. - To prepare for crisis communication situations and develop a crisis communication strategy. - To practice your knowledge in a crisis simulation exercise (speak in front of a camera, press conferences, tv-statements…). - To develop the ability to think critically and creatively about issues and crises through collaborative working in small groups on selected case studies and through analyzing current PR issues.
Description / Program	Companies and institutions today need to consider an increasing number of (digital) publics ready to take action on issues that concern them and for which they hold these organizations responsible. The increasing complexity of social, economic, and technological systems is also the reason why the number of crises that can potentially harm a company, a whole branch, or even a nation is constantly growing. Active reputation management and well-prepared crisis communication have therefore become standard management tools in well-run companies. Students will learn about reputation and crisis management processes and structures in theory and practice. Using case studies, empirical research studies, and an analysis of the problems and the stakeholders' expectations, students will gain knowledge about issues and crisis management policies and tools. They can also apply and deepen their knowledge of issues and crisis communication strategies in a full-day crisis simulation exercise.
Time schedule Block 1: **Oct 11** (Fri)	09.15–10.45 (Intro); 11.00–12.30 (Topic 1 presented) 13.30–15.00 (Topic 2 presented) 15.15–16.45 (Topic 3 presented)
Oct 12 (Sat)	09.15–12.15 (Case studies)
Block 2: **Oct 25** (Fri)	09.15–10.45 (Topic 4 presented); 11.00–12.30 (Topic 5 presented); 13.30–15.00 (Topic 6 presented)
Oct 26 (Sat)	09.15–17.00 Crisis simulation exercise, Summary

October 11 (Friday): 09:15-16:45		Key texts
09:15–10:45	**Crisis and Reputation management: What it's all about?** ▪ Key terms (stakeholder, identity, image, reputation, issues, issue life cycle, crisis) ▪ Fundamentals of crisis and issues management	Ingenhoff (2018): *Monitoring.* Lawrence & Weber (2014): *Chapters 1 and 2.* Griffin (2014): *Chapters 9 and 10.* Mitchell et al. (1997): *Stakeholder Identification*
	Reputation Management Corporate and country reputation as an attitudinal construct	Ingenhoff (2018): *Reputation* Thiessen, Ingenhoff (2011): *Safeguarding Reputation*
11:00–12:30 (Topic 1 presented)	**Crisis Communication Theory I: SCCT and Contingency Theory** Please explain key concepts of a) *Situational Crisis Communication Theory* (T. Coombs) and the foundation of attribution theory (B. Weiner), and b) *Contingency Theory* (G.T. Cameron); give examples/cases for each approach	Coombs (2007): *Protecting Organization Reputations during a Crisis* Coombs, W. T., & Tachkova, E. R. (2023). Integrating Moral Outrage in SCCT Coombs (2021): *Crisis PR*
13:30–15.00 (Topic 2 presented)	**Crisis Comm. Theory II: The Rhetorical Arena** Please focus on the framework of the "Rhetorical Arena", fundamentals of arena theory and present the consumers and citizens as examples of voices; illustrate the theory with cases, e.g. VW as in Raupp (2019) **or** Ebola as in Rodin et al. (2019)	Frandsen & Johansen (2017): Chapter 8 *(The rhetorical arena)*, Chapter 9 *(Consumer and citizens)* Raupp (2019) Crisis Comm RAT Rodin et al. (2019): *Disentangling rhetorical subarenas*
15:15–16:45 (Topic 3 presented)	**Internet Contagion Theory, Social Media, Digital Collectives and Crises** Please focus on how to evaluate online issue threats, explain ICT dimensions for issue prioritization, give basic insights into social network theory, and explain how Internet contagions can increase stakeholder power. Please also consider latest developments like digital collectives and digital issues management.	Coombs & Holladay (2017): *Internet Contagion Theory* Coombs (2002): *Assessing online issue threats* Illia & Colleoni (2023): *Digital Issues Management* Liu, Kim, & Pennington-Gray, (2015): *Bed bug crisis*

October 12 (Saturday) 09:15-12:15		Key texts
09:15–12:15	**Crisis Communication Case Studies** **(Group work)**	Case 1: Steering Princess Cruises through the Covid-19 Crisis Case 2: Game of Thrones -Tourism in Dubrovnik, Croatia

October 25 (Fri): 09:15-15:00		Key texts
09:15–10:45 (Topic 4 presented)	**International Crisis Communication across Cultures** Please present theoretical approaches and insights on how to cope with cultures in crisis, also explaining the cultural dimensions by Hofstede (1980) and the GLOBE study (House et al., 2004). Find examples of crisis communication where culture played a major role and apply the basic concepts. Discuss briefly what we can learn with respect to resilience from firms coping with Covid.	Frandsen & Johansen (2017): Chapter 7 (*Crisis communication across cultures*) Dhanesh & Sriramesh (2017): *Culture and crisis communication* Alonso et al., (2020): *Covid-19, aftermath, impacts, and hospitality firms: An international perspective.* You may also consult http://globeproject.com; https://geerthofstede.com
11:00–12:30 (Topic 5 presented)	**The Role of (Internal) Activism and Internal Crisis Communication** Please explain the key terms, the 5 stages of activism, how to cope with activists, and find positive/negative cases to apply the insights. Also, please explain with reference to Lee & Rim how a partnership with an NGO could lead to spillover effects, and which would be an effective response strategy. Also consider internal activism.	Ferguson (2018): *NGO Communication* Lee & Rim (2017): *Company-non profit partnerships, negative spillover, and response strategies* Lee, Y. (2021): *The rise of internal activism*
13:30–15.00 (Topic 6 presented)	**The Role of Business Ethics and CSR during Crises** Please explain the role of business ethics and CSR during a crisis, referring also to the key terms and concepts (e.g., Carroll's pyramid). Discuss how a crisis like Covid-19 pandemic can influence the developments of CSR, and how strategic marketing approaches might change (He & Harris). You may also add other examples to show the link between CSR and crisis communication.	Tench, R. (2021): *Community and Society: Corporate Social Responsibility* Lawrence & Weber (2017): Chapter 3: *Corporation's Responsibilities* He, H. & Harris, L. (2020): *Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on CSR*
	Summary and outlook on crisis simulation	

October 26 (Sat): Crisis Simulation Day 9:15-17.00	
09:15–13.00	**Crisis Communication Simulation** You work on a given crisis case scenario in your group. You are members of a corporate communication department. You will be given several tasks at different points in time. You have to solve these tasks within a limited period of time and send the deliverables to us at a precisely specified time (e.g., press release).
14.00–15.30	**Analysis & final discussion of cases** We will analyze your performance during the crisis simulation, give ideas for improving, and will discuss your experiences in the class forum.
15.30–17.00	**Summing up of learnings, final discussion** of the overall course and briefing for final exam.

Learning Method / Style of Lessons	We will combine presentations, discussions, case studies, and a whole-day crisis simulation exercise. For further details, please also see below "exam style/grading".

When registering for the course, you will be assigned to one of six topics. You will work and develop on one particular topic **before the course starts** and solve a case study during the course.

1) **Text work/PPT Presentation**: You are expected to examine a specific topic in detail before the course starts (for example, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and Contingency Theory; see list below). Please present this topic in a ppt-presentation of about 30 minutes, and **please also include a short discussion** (either during or after the presentation). The literature is mentioned below. You are expected to present the topic coherently, not just one text followed by another. Moreover, you are welcome to integrate additional texts (e.g., from the authors of the model/theory presented) relevant to the topic. When preparing the presentation, reflect on what could be relevant for other participants, for example, by making connections to the other five core topics, and/or to the tourism sector. In each presentation, the related topic should be clarified with a current example from Switzerland or abroad. The example should be a real case, which is not mentioned in the literature. The example needs to be chosen and investigated by you. (Important remark: All participants must read all literature, including the other groups' literature).

   Deadline for **uploading your ppt**: Please upload your presentation on iCorsi **one day before your presentation, till 10:00 a.m.**

2) **Case study**: We reserve a time slot on October 12 from 9:15-12:15 a.m. for you to solve a case with your group, among others. However, you are free to choose any other time slot individually in your group to work on the case and finalize the task. The texts for the case studies are uploaded on iCorsi. Please read the case of your group before the course starts.

Case 1: Steering Princess Cruises through the Covid-19 Crisis
Case 2: Game of Thrones – Tourism in Dubrovnik, Croatia

Each group is expected to address the following five questions.
- What were the causes leading to the situation? What were the consequences?
- Analyze the type of crisis and reputation threat. Which crisis communication strategy would you recommend according to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (see T. Coombs)? Compare your strategy to the strategy that was chosen in the case.
- Which immediate actions were taken? What were the short- and long-term communication goals? Evaluate and explain what you would have done differently.
- Which are the most important stakeholders and which key messages did they receive? Which key messages would you suggest? With which instruments would you distribute them?

Please summarize your results in a PowerPoint file (max. 5-6 slides).
Deadline for uploading the ppt: October 18, 8 a.m. (at the latest!)

Exam Style / Grading	Participants' overall evaluation for this course will be based on the framework depicted in the table below:		
	Power Point presentation	Participants prepare and present a ppt presentation (see above). There are six different topics (see time schedule). **Please study the relevant literature before the course begins and upload a PPT file.**	**40%**
	Case study (Group work)	Participants work in groups on a crisis management & communication case. They analyze a given case and upload a **PowerPoint file**	
	Exam	The final exam (**60 minutes**) is based on the required readings of each group and the presented topics as well as all course contents given by the lecturer. The exam may include multiple choice as well as open questions and case studies.	**60%**
	Participation (sessions)	Each participant is expected to attend all sessions (with a maximum of 4 hours of absence with a valid excuse), complete the readings, and participate in the discussions and group work during class. Class participation may result in an up- or downgrade of 0.25 points, **missing more than 4 hours of all sessions will result in an extra task or exclusion from the final exam**.	**+/- 0.25**
	Participation (crisis simulation)	Each student is expected to participate into the crisis simulation study to gain first insights into crisis communication. Active participation may result in an up- or downgrade of 0.25 points.	**+/- 0.25**

Readings/ Textbooks

Crisis Communication Theory I: SCCT and Contingency Theory

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review, 10*(3), 163-176.

Coombs, W. T., & Tachkova, E. R. (2023). Integrating Moral Outrage in Situational Crisis Communication Theory: A Triadic Appraisal Model for Crises. *Management Communication Quarterly, 37*(4), 798-820. https://doi.org/10.1177/08933189221151177

Coombs, W. T. (2021): Crisis public relations management. In R. Tench, & L. Yeomans, L. (Eds.): *Exploring public relations. Global strategic communication* (5th ed., p. 344-364). Harlow, England: Pearson.

Topic 1

Crisis Communication Theory II: The Rhetorical Arena

Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2017). *Organizational crisis communication*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE. Chapter 8: The new rhetorical arena, pp. 139-158.

Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2017). *Organizational crisis communication*. Los Angeles, CA: SAGE. Chapter 9: Consumer and citizens: Emotions and social media, pp. 159-176.

Raupp, J. (2019). Crisis communication in the rhetorical arena. *Public Relations Review*, 45(4). **OR**

Rodin, P.; Ghersetti, M.; & Odén, T. (2019). Disentangling rhetorical subarenas of public health crisis communication: A study of the 2014–2015 Ebola outbreak in the news media and social media in Sweden. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management.* 27(3), pp. 237-246.

Topic 2

Internet Contagion Theory, Social Media, Digital Collectives and Crises

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2017). Consumer empowerment through the web: How Internet contagions can increase stakeholder power. In S. Duhé (Ed.), *New Media and Public Relations* (3rd ed., pp. 175-188). New York: Peter Lang.

Coombs, W. T. (2002). Assessing online issue threats: Issue contagions and their effect on issue prioritization. *Journal of Public Affairs, 2*(4), 215-229.

Illia, L. &, Colleoni, E. (2023). Digital Corporate Communication & Issues Management: Monitoring digital collectives and tipping points of refraction around issues. In Luhoma V., and Badham, M. (Eds.) *Handbook of Digital Corporate Communication*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Topic 3

International Crisis Communication across Cultures

Frandsen, F., & Johansen, W. (2017). *Organizational crisis communication*. Los Ange-les, CA: SAGE. Chapter 7: Crisis Communication across Cultures, pp. 121-136.

Dhanesh, G. S., & Sriramesh, K. (2018). Culture and crisis communication: Nestle India's Maggi noodles case. *Journal of International Management, 24*(3), 204-214.

Alonso, A.D., Kok, S.K., Bressan, A. et al. (2020): COVID-19, aftermath, impacts, and hospitality firms: An international perspective: *International Journal of Hospitality Management* 91, (2020) 102654.

Topic 4

The Role of (Internal) Activism and Internal Crisis Communication

Ferguson, D. P. (2018). *Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) Communication*. The International Encyclopedia of Strategic Communication.

Lee, S.Y. & Rim, H (2017). Company-nonprofit partnerships, negative spillover, and response strategies. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 11 (3), 194-208.

Lee, Y. (2021). The rise of internal activism: motivations of employees' responses to organizational crisis, Journal of Public Relations Research, 33(5), 387-406.

Topic 5

The Role of Business Ethics and CSR during Crises

Tench, R. (2021): Community and Society: corporate social responsibility (CSR). In R. Tench & L. Yeomans (Eds). *Exploring public relations. Global Strategic Communication* (5th ed., pp. 66-93.). Harlow, England: Pearson.

Lawrence A. T., & Weber, J. (2017). *Business and society. Stakeholders, ethics, public policy* (15th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Chapter 3: The Corporation's Social Responsibilities, pp. 45-67.

He, H. & Harris, L. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, pp. 176-182.

Topic 6