Course Title:
Risk Assessment and Communication

Course Number:
COMM 5393-101

Course Description:
This course offers an overview of risk and crisis communication theory and research.

Class Dates, Location and Hours:
Dates: February 27-March 4, 2012
Hours: Mon-Fri 6:00 p.m.-9:30 p.m.; Sat 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; Sun 8:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
Last day to enroll or drop without penalty: January 29, 2012

Site Director:
Phone: 703-418-4800; Fax: 703-418-2730; E-mail: apwashington@ou.edu

Professor Contact Information:
Course Professor: Elena Bessarabova, PhD
Mailing Address: Department of Communication
University of Oklahoma
Norman, OK 73019
Telephone Number: (240) 478-8198 (cell)
Fax Number: (405) 325-7625
E-mail Address: ebess@ou.edu
Professor availability: The professor will be available via e-mail to students before and after the class sessions. On-site office hours are half an hour before and after each class session, by appointment.

Textbook(s) and Instructional Materials:
Materials posted on the OU Desire to Learn (D2L) system: Journal articles and book chapters will be uploaded to D2L two months prior to class. Access D2L at http://learn.ou.edu; enter your OU NetID (4+4) and password, and select course to access material. Please contact your local Site Director if you require assistance.

Course Objectives:
The primary goal of this course is to provide an overview of theory and research in the field of risk and crisis communication, focusing specifically on cognition, emotion, risk perceptions, risk/crisis management and communication analysis.
Course Outline:

- Day 1 What is risk/crisis? What is risk/crisis communication?
- Day 2 Approaches to communicating risk.
- Day 3 Risk perceptions.
- Day 4 Risk and emotion.
- Day 5 Special topics in risk & crisis communication: Terrorism.
- Day 6 Audience analysis and message design.
- Day 7 Research presentations: You will present the proposals for your post-seminar paper.

Assignments, Grading and Due Dates:

1. You should have read the bulk of the readings before the course begins and should be prepared to discuss the assigned readings each class session. This course will be conducted at a graduate level; the professor will act more as a facilitator than a lecturer. This means participants are responsible for providing considered, informed, and active contributions to the discussion.

2. Starting from the first day of class, you will submit a written assignment that will consist of two parts:
   a. Summary/Reflection. A summary/reflection of each reading assigned for that particular day will be due starting on the first day of class. This paper should be a single-spaced, one page-long submission. This assignment is to be uploaded on D2L (see “Summary/Reflection” dropbox) one hour before the beginning of the class for which the readings are assigned.
   b. Discussion Questions. You are expected to come up with one thoughtful question per reading (so if two readings are assigned for a particular day, two questions are due from you) and post them on D2L under “Discussions” one hour before the beginning of the class for which the readings are assigned. Since you will be able to see other students’ questions, avoid redundant questions. Your questions can critique/challenge the ideas presented in the readings, ask about potential application of the ideas in the readings, and point to inconsistencies across readings. Ultimately, your questions should demonstrate the knowledge and understanding of the material. Class discussion will be partially based on your questions.

3. Guest Lecture Presentation. Starting from the second day of class, you can choose any reading to cover as a guest lecturer. Please let me know in advance via e-mail what reading you choose. The readings for this assignment will be assigned on the first come, first serve basis. This assignment also consists of two parts:
   a. A written assignment representing a reflection on the reading that you chose. This paper should be double-spaced, contain 7-10 pages of text written in APA format, and include a reference section. This paper is to be uploaded on D2L under “Discussions” (see “Guest Lectures” forum) on the first day of class. Your colleagues are expected to review this paper before attending your guest lecture appearance.
   b. An oral presentation (20-30 minutes) on the material will be due on the day that the reading you chose is assigned.

4. Post-Seminar Paper. You will be asked to write a term paper relevant to the material discussed in this class. Source material may include and/or expand on the reading list provided for this course. You will be asked to provide an analysis and communication recommendations of an existing risk/crisis including:
   a. Problem definition
   b. Audience analysis
   c. Communication recommendations
The paper must follow APA format, have a separate title page, include a 100-word abstract, have 13-15 pages of text, and include a complete reference section. Students will first submit a short proposal introducing the topic they wish to address and some potential sources beyond the list supplied. Once the proposal has been accepted, students may begin work on the paper. All work must be original and be properly prepared and referenced in APA format.

Grading: This is a letter-graded course: A, B, C, D, or F.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Percent of Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary/Reflection</td>
<td>1 Hour Before Each Subsequent Class</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Guest Lecture Presentations</td>
<td>During Class Sessions</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Class Discussions</td>
<td>During Class Sessions</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Seminar Paper</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>25%</td>
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NOTICE: Failure to meet assignment due dates could result in a grade of I (Incomplete) and may adversely impact Tuition Assistance and/or Financial Aid.
POLICIES AND NOTICES

Attendance/Grade Policy

Attendance and participation in interaction, individual assignments, group exercises, simulations, role playing, etc. are valuable aspects of any course because much of the learning comes from discussions in class with other students. It is expected that you attend all classes and be on time except for excused emergencies.

Excused absences are given for professor mandated activities or legally required activities such as emergencies or military assignments. Unavoidable personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) serious illness; delays in getting to class because of accidents, etc.; deaths and funerals, and hazardous road conditions will be excused.

If you are obtaining financial assistance (TA, STAP, FA, VA, Scholarship, etc.) to pay all or part of your tuition cost, you must follow your funding agency/institution’s policy regarding “I” (Incomplete) grades unless the timeline is longer than what the University policy allows then you must adhere to the University policy.

Students who receive Financial Aid must resolve/complete any “I” (Incomplete) grades by the end of the term or he/she may be placed on “financial aid probation.” If the “I” grade is not resolved/completed by the end of the following term, the student’s Financial Aid may be suspended make the student ineligible for further Financial Aid.

Students are responsible for meeting the guidelines of Tuition Assistance and Veterans Assistance. See the education counselor at your local education center for a complete description of your TA or VA requirements.

Academic Honesty

Honesty is a fundamental precept in all academic activities and … [you] have a special obligation to observe the highest standards of honesty. Academic misconduct in any form is inimical to the purposes and functions of the University and is therefore unacceptable and is rigorously proscribed. Academic misconduct includes:

- cheating (using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise), plagiarism, falsification of records, unauthorized possession of examinations, intimidation, and any and all other actions that may improperly affect the evaluation of a student’s academic performance or achievement; assisting others in any such act; or attempting to engage in such acts.

All acts of academic misconduct will be reported and adjudicated as prescribed by the student code of the University of Oklahoma. All students should review the “Student’s Guide to Academic Integrity” found at http://www.ou.edu/provost/integrity

Accommodation Statement

The College of Continuing Education [Advanced Programs] is committed to making its activities as accessible as possible. For accommodations on the basis of disability, please contact your OU Site Director.

Course Policies

Advanced Programs policy is to order books in paperback if available. Courses, dates, and professors are subject to change. Please check with your OU Site Director. Students should retain a copy of any assignments that are mailed to the professor for the course.

Copyright

Any and all course materials, syllabus, lessons, lectures, etc. are the property of professor teaching the course and the Board of Regents of the University of Oklahoma and are protected under applicable copyright.

For more information about Advanced Programs, visit our website at: http://www.goou.ou.edu/
INSTRUCTOR VITA
Elena Bessarabova

Education
- 2010 – Ph. D. in Communication from the University of Maryland at College Park
- 2004 – M. A. in Organizational Communication from the University of Texas at Austin
- 1998 – B. A. with Honors in Linguistics and Education from Kuban State University (Krasnodar, Russia)

Current Positions
- Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Oklahoma
- Researcher at the Center for Applied Social Research (University of Oklahoma)

Frequently Taught Advanced Programs Courses
COMM 6433: Seminar in Intercultural Communication

Major Areas of Teaching and Research Interest
My research program is within the areas of social influence and intercultural research. Within social influence, I am interested in the effects of discrepancy, emotion and resistance on risk perception and message-processing. In the realm of intercultural communication, I am interested in cross-cultural differences in information integration regarding risk. I also study credibility assessment, in particular, how culture informs the differences in verbal and nonverbal cues that might be associated with deception.

Representative Publications and Presentations

Representative Honors and Awards Received
- Candidacy Fellowship $3000 – University of Maryland, College Park.
- Goldhaber Travel Grant $800 – University of Maryland, College Park.
- Fellowship $500 - University of Texas, Austin.

Major Professional Affiliations
- International Communication Association
- National Communication Association