



M.P.S. in Strategic Public Relations

PSPR 6230: Crisis and Issues Management

3 Credits

Instructor Information

Instructor: Gary Klasen

Gary Klasen is the president of Charlotte-based Klasen Communications, which focuses on internal, external, strategic and community-focused communications.

Klasen has significant corporate, small business and agency experience, beginning his career as a newspaper writer and editor. He worked for three Fortune 500 companies in roles as director of internal communications and public relations, as well as vice president of media relations and then corporate communications for a \$20 billion global manufacturer. He's a member of the prestigious Arthur Page Society for accomplished leaders in the public relations and communications field and received a Master's in Strategic Public Relations from George Washington University as a class valedictorian.

Proficiency areas include: strategic communications and business planning; external and crisis communications/media relations; internal communications; presentation training; crisis media training; speech writing; senior leadership counseling; issues management; financial communications; event planning, and community relations.

In 2020, Klasen was a teaching assistant for Professor Larry Parnell at George Washington University's first-ever class in Communications Strategies in Project Management. He is an adjunct professor for the Crisis Communications and Issues Management course in GW's Master's program in Strategic Public Relations. Previously, Klasen was an adjunct professor of Business Communications at John Carroll University in Cleveland.

Klasen had been the vice president of corporate communications for Eaton, a Cleveland-based \$20 billion industrial manufacturer. While at Eaton, he received The Davis Young Award for Exceptional Mentors from the Public Relations Society of Cleveland. The award recognizes excellence in mentoring students and young professionals.

Prior to Eaton, Klasen was a communications director at TRW, an \$18 billion supplier to the space and defense business and automotive industry. He joined TRW in Cleveland to manage external

communications and later worked in Detroit for its Occupant Safety Systems business, focusing on reputation management and crisis communications issues.

His PR career began with Sears in media relations and then as national director of internal communications and CEO/senior executive speechwriter. Before that, he was the assistant publisher of editorial operations for the 12-paper Press Publications newspaper chain in Elmhurst, IL, also writing for The Chicago Sun-Times and Suburban Sun-Times.

Contact Information

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Course Details

Course Description and Overview

Crisis and Issues Management explores the intersection of communications and policy disciplines—including environmental scanning, public policy analysis, public policy advocacy, strategic communications, media relations, grassroots mobilization, coalition management, and corporate reputation management—and how these issues work together to further the broad strategic goals of organizations. The focus of this class is on understanding and designing an issues management plan. The course utilizes Harvard Business Review case studies and current events to facilitate skills development and understanding the complexity of planning for, reacting to, and evaluating a long-term issues management strategy.

Course Learning Objectives

After completing the course, students will know how to identify emerging issues and evaluate their impact, as well as understand how to leverage core concerns into positive actions and use that leverage to build a platform that addresses crises or potential crises, counteract opponents, and creates competitive advantage for the enterprise. Specifically, you will be able to:

1. Understand how issues management overlays the organization's strategic planning and ultimately the organization's reason for being, or DNA.
2. Understand strategic planning, policy making, and issues management in a holistic environment focused not on simply "solving" the issues but on setting priorities, delegating issues cross-functionally, and selecting appropriate issues from which to build a platform for sustainable enterprise leadership and executing on the platform.
3. Develop an understanding of internal and external factors that become issues, create a framework for identifying issues and establishing priorities, and recognize the forces that shape the evolution and outcome of issues.
4. Understand how issues intersect in the corporate, governmental, and civic arenas; how and why those intersection points create issues for organizations; and how to create a framework for managing forward from the intersection points.
5. Appreciate the fast pace at which issues management moves and the requirement that the issues manager be proactive and deeply knowledgeable of the organization's operations and strategies.
6. Research, formulate, and support your point of view regarding specific issues and the leadership opportunities or threats they represent.

7. Adopt an integrated and strategic approach toward issues management versus a PR spin or narrow "solve the crisis now" approach.

Program Learning Objectives

Upon the completion of the Masters in SPR, students will have obtained an enhanced understanding and skills in:

1. Fundamentals of effective, strategic communications;
2. Best practices for writing, media relations and strategic communications planning and implementation;
3. Leadership in communications on a sound ethical and financial basis;
4. Managing the implementation of strategic communications strategies.

Graduate School Expectations

Students enrolled in a graduate program should take their academic responsibilities seriously and be prepared to meet the following expectations:

1. Utilize effective time management skills so as to complete and submit their assignments on their required due dates and times.
2. Have attained a mastery of written communication skills including proper sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and word usage.
3. Understand how to properly format in-text citations and references for resources and information integrated into their written assignments.

Course Evaluation

At the end of the semester, students will be given the opportunity to evaluate the course through GW's online course evaluation system. It is very important that you take the time to complete an evaluation. Students are also encouraged to provide feedback throughout the course of the semester by contacting:

Lawrence Parnell

Director, Strategic Public Relations Program

lparnell@gwu.edu

Suzanne Farrand

Director of Academic Administration, GSPM

sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

Required Text and Learning Materials

- Heath, R. L., & Palenchar, M. J. (2008). *Strategic issues management: Organizations and public policy challenges*. Sage Publications.
- Johnson, T. (2017). *Crisis leadership: How to lead in times of crisis, threat and uncertainty*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- [Harvard Business Publishing \(HBP\) Coursepack](#) – Case studies will be accessible via Blackboard.

Additional required readings will be provided on Blackboard in the Weekly Content folder for each week.

Evaluation and Grading

Assessments will contribute toward the student’s grade based on the following chart:

Assignment Category	Weight
Discussions	25%
Group Assignments	15%
Individual Assignments	35%
Individual Final Project	25%
<i>Total</i>	<i>100%</i>

Tentative Course Schedule

The instructor reserves the right to alter course content and/or adjust the pace to accommodate class progress. Students are responsible for keeping up with all adjustments to the course calendar. Final dates and details will be found on the Blackboard course site.

Week	Topic	Lessons	Readings	Assignments
1	Defining an Issue & Crisis	<p>Course Introduction</p> <p>Week 1 Lesson: Issues and Crisis Management</p> <p>Review the Issues Management Lifecycle (on Blackboard)</p>	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 1 p. 278-295 <p>Crisis Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction p. 47-48 p. 60-63 <p>“The Crisis in Crisis PR” by Matthew DeBord (on Blackboard)</p> <p>“United Airlines CEO Oscar Munoz Named PRWeek U.S. Communicator of the Year” PRWeek</p> <p>HBP Case Study: David Dao on United Airlines (917026-PDF-ENG)</p>	<p>Discussion 1.1: Introductions</p> <p>Assignment 1.1: United Airlines Case Study</p>
2	Strategic Issues Planning	<p>Week 2 Lesson: Strategic Issues Management</p>	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapter 3 p. 39-42. 	<p>Discussion 2.1: Walmart Case Study</p> <p>Assignment 2.1: Chick-Fil-A Case Study</p>

			<p>Crisis Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • p. 60-65 • Chapter 4 <p>Chick-fil-A Case Study (on Blackboard)</p> <p>HBP Case Study: Walmart Gun Control Case</p> <p>A Practical Process Guide to Issues Management, Public Affairs Council (2006) (on Blackboard)</p>	
3	Image & Reputation	Week 3 Lesson: Image and Reputation	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 4 • p. 210-213 <p>HBP Case Study: When Scandal Engulfs a Celebrity Endorser</p> <p>HBP Case Study: McKinsey & Co. – Protecting its Reputation (A & B)</p> <p>Mickelson articles (on Blackboard)</p> <p>Edelman Trust Barometer 2021 (on Blackboard)</p> <p>“There’s No Such Thing as an Effective Apology Anymore” PR News</p> <p>Writing a Position Paper (on Blackboard)</p>	<p>Discussion 3.1: Mickelson Case Study</p> <p>Assignment 3.1: McKinsey & Co. Case Study</p> <p>Assignment 3.2: Individual Project Proposal</p>
4	Stakeholder Strategies	Week 4 Lesson: Stakeholder Strategies	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 5 <p>Crisis Leadership</p>	<p>Discussion 4.1: Marine Stewardship Council Case Study</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • p. 145-147 <p>HBP Case Study: Procter & Gamble’s Battle with Nelson Peltz</p> <p>HBP Case Study: Marine Stewardship Council</p>	<p>Assignment 4.1: Group Assignment – Procter & Gamble Case Study</p>
5	<p>Image Recovery, Brands, and Measurement</p>	<p>Week 5 Lesson: Image Recovery, Brands, and Measurement</p>	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 10 <p>Video: Image Repair Theory, Professor William Benoit</p> <p>HBP Case Study: Making Target the Target</p>	<p>Discussion 5.1: Target Case Study</p> <p>Assignment 5.1: Position Paper</p>
6	<p>Connections, Messaging, and Tactics</p>	<p>Week 6 Lesson: Connections, Messaging, and Tactics</p>	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 6 <p>Crisis Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • p. 145-147 <p>HBP Case Study: Haidilao Catering: From a Hot Pot to Crisis Management</p>	<p>Discussion 6.1: Haidilao Catering</p> <p>Assignment 6.1: Group Assignment – Flipping the Issue: An International Brewer</p>
7	<p>Social Media Challenges</p>	<p>Week 7 Lesson: Social Media Challenges and Opportunities</p>	<p>Crisis Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • p. 151-157 <p>Introduction to Strategic Public Relations: Media Relations in a Digital World, Chapter 7 (on Blackboard)</p> <p>HBP Case Study: Greenpeace’s Unfriend Coal Campaign and Facebook</p>	<p>Discussion 7.1: Greenpeace’s “Unfriend Coal” Campaign and Facebook</p> <p>Assignment 7.1: Tesla Case Study</p>

			<p>HBP Case Study: Elon Musk: Saving the Fate of Tesla</p> <p>“Tesla Asked Law Firm to Fire Associate” Wall Street Journal</p> <p>“Lessons for Social Media from the Fairness Doctrine” Columbia Journalism Review</p> <p>“When Journalists Go on the Air” The New York Times</p> <p>Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act</p>	
8	Crisis Planning	Week 8 Lesson: Crisis Management	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 8 • P. 229-237 <p>Crisis Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapters 2-4 <p>HBP Case Study: Rana Plaza Workplace Safety in Bangladesh (A & B)</p> <p>The Top 20 crises of 2021, The Holmes Report (on Blackboard)</p> <p>"Friend vs. Foe: Viewing the Media as a Partner in Crisis Response" Institute for Public Relations (on Blackboard)</p>	<p>Discussion 8.1: Top 20 Crises in 2021: The Holmes Report</p> <p>Assignment 8.1: Rana Plaza Case Study</p>
9	Crisis Leadership	Week 9 Lesson: Crisis Leadership	<p>Strategic Issues Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 9 <p>Crisis Leadership</p>	<p>Discussion 9.1: Snapchat and Illicit Drug Sales</p>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapters 5-7 <p>Video: "Exclusive: Snapchat Executive On Company's Efforts To Stop Sale Of Counterfeit Pills" NBC News</p> <p>"Southwest Airlines Engine Explodes in Flight, Killing a Passenger" New York Times</p> <p>HBP Case Study: How the Other Fukushima Plant Survived</p>	Assignment 9.1: The Other Fukushima Plant
10	Issues & Crisis Management Plan	Week 10 Lesson: Addressing Your Issue or Crisis	None	<p>Discussion 10.1: Portfolio of Comments</p> <p>Assignment 10.1: Individual Final Project</p>

Expectations and Responsibilities

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site regularly throughout the semester to review weekly course content, view announcements, and submit assignments. Students can access the course site through [GWU Blackboard](#).

Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or the [IT Blackboard web page](#).

Please note that your access to this course on Blackboard will continue for one month after the course ends. If you wish to keep any work or materials, you must download or save them before the course closes.

Technology Requirements

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have the required technology to fully participate in this course. The minimum technology requirements for learning online at GW are outlined on the [Technical Requirements and Support](#) web page.

If you have any problems with the technology in this course, you can seek technological support from GW in a variety of ways, outlined on the [IT Support](#) website.

GW is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment that is accessible for everyone, including people with disabilities.

The following links provide more information about the accessibility of technologies that may be used in this course:

- [Blackboard accessibility](#)

- [Microsoft Office accessibility](#)
- [Adobe accessibility](#)
- [Vimeo accessibility](#)
- [YouTube accessibility](#)
- [VoiceThread accessibility](#)
- [Webex accessibility](#)

If you have any issues regarding the accessibility of the technology used in this course, please contact your instructor. You may also explore the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

Technology Expectations

Regarding technology skills, you should be able to:

- Create documents and presentation slides
- Use a webcam and microphone
- Use a digital camera or scanner
- Upload files, including recordings and images
- Be open to learning and registering for new technologies
- Be flexible when technological glitches happen (which is a given)
- Seek technological help when necessary by contacting the Division of Information Technology

If you have any problems with the technology expectations in this course, please contact your instructor.

Getting Started

Everything you need to get started in the course is contained within the Blackboard course site. You can use the menu links on the left side panel to view different components. The content for each learning unit is divided into folders—one for each week.

Participation Policy

All students are expected to learn and contribute by being a positive participant in discussions, activities, presentations, and assignments. If you have an unavoidable conflict or become ill in a way that will affect your participation in a given week, please notify your instructor immediately.

Communication & Feedback

Important announcements will be posted periodically via Blackboard’s announcement feature throughout the course. The instructor will strive to reply to student questions within 24 hours and provide feedback for assignments within a week after the due date.

Grading Scale

Following is the grade scale for all CPS classes:

Grade	Range	Grade Standard
A	94-100	Your work is outstanding and ready for submission in a professional environment. Your material, effort, research, and writing demonstrate superior work.

A-	90-93	Represents solid work with minor errors. Overall, excellent work.
B+	87-89	Very good. Represents well-written material, research, and presentation, but needs some minor work.
B	83-86	Good work, but needs reworking and more effort.
B-	80-82	You've completed the assignment, but you are not meeting all of the requirements.
C+	77-79	Needs improvement in content and in effort. Shows some motivation and concern.
C	73-76	Needs reworking, improved effort, and additional research. Shows minimal motivation and concern.
C-	70-72 (lowest grade to pass)	Poor performance. Major errors, too many misspellings, problems with accuracy, etc.
F	Below 70	Unacceptable performance, or inability to submit the assignment.

Netiquette

Please observe the following rules of netiquette for communicating online:

- Remain professional, respectful, and courteous at all times.
- Remember that a real human being wrote each post and will read what you write in response. It is easy to misinterpret discussion posts. Let's give the benefit of the doubt.
- If you have a strong opinion on a topic, it is acceptable to express it as long as it is not phrased as an attack. Please be gracious with differing opinions.
- When upset, wait a day or two prior to posting. Messages posted (or emailed) in anger are often regretted later.
- Proofread and use the spell check tool when you type a post. It makes the post easier to read and helps your readers understand what you are saying.

Your instructor reserves the right to delete any post that is deemed inappropriate for the discussion forum, blog, or wiki without prior notification to the student. This includes any post containing language that is offensive, rude, profane, racist, or hateful. Posts that are seriously off-topic or serve no purpose other than to vent frustration will also be removed.

Credit Hour Policy

For this **10-week, 3-credit course** there will be an average of **9-10 hours** of combined direct instruction and independent learning per week. More information about GWU's credit hour policy can be found at [the Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page (Under: Assignment of Credit Hour Policy).

University Policies & Services

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is an integral part of the educational process, and GW takes these matters very seriously. Violations of academic integrity occur when students fail to cite research sources properly,

engage in unauthorized collaboration, falsify data, and in other ways outlined in the Code of Academic Integrity. Students accused of academic integrity violations should contact the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (SRR) to learn more about their rights and options in the process. Outcomes can range from failure of assignment to expulsion from the university, including a transcript notation. For more information, please refer to the [Office of Academic Integrity website](#), email (rights@gwu.edu), or call (202-994-6757).

Copyright Statement

Unless explicitly allowed by the instructor, course materials, class discussions, and examinations are created for and expected to be used by class participants only. The recording and rebroadcasting of such material, by any means, is forbidden.

The Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 10) governs the rights attributed to owners of copyrighted work. Under certain circumstances, educational institutions may provide copies of copyrighted works to students. The copies may not be copied nor used for any other purpose besides private study, scholarship, or research. Users should not provide electronic copies of any materials provided on this course's Blackboard site to unauthorized users. If a user fails to comply with Fair Use restrictions, he/she may be held liable for copyright infringement. No further transmission or electronic distribution is permitted.

Use of Electronic Course Materials and Class Recordings

Students are encouraged to use electronic course materials, including recorded class sessions, for private personal use in connection with their academic program of study. Electronic course materials and recorded class sessions should not be shared or used for non-course related purposes unless express permission has been granted by the instructor. Students who impermissibly share any electronic course materials are subject to discipline under the Student Code of Conduct. Please contact the instructor if you have questions regarding what constitutes permissible or impermissible use of electronic course materials and/or recorded class sessions. Please contact [Disability Support Services](#) if you need additional accommodations for accessing electronic course materials.

University Policy on Observance of Religious Holidays

Students must notify faculty as early as possible, but no later than three weeks prior to the absence, of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance. If the holiday falls in the first three weeks of class, the student must inform the faculty within the first week of the semester that they are enrolled in the course.

To the greatest extent possible, faculty must continue to extend to these students the courtesy of absence without penalty on such occasions, including permission to make up examinations.

Faculty who intend to observe a religious holiday must arrange at the beginning of the semester to reschedule missed classes or to make other provisions for their course-related activities.

For the full text of the policy and calendar of religious holidays, please see [the Office of the Provost's Policies](#) web page (Religious Holidays document).

Disability Support Services (DSS)

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact Disability Support Services. They can be contacted by phone at 202-994-8250 or in person at Rome Hall, 801 22nd Street, NW, Suite 102, to establish eligibility and to coordinate reasonable accommodations. For additional information visit the [Disability Support Services](#) website.

Counseling and Psychological Services

GW's Colonial Health Center offers counseling and psychological services, supporting mental health and personal development by collaborating directly with students to overcome challenges and difficulties that may interfere with academic, emotional, and personal success. For additional information call 202-994-5300 or visit the [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) website.

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is located in Gelman Library at 2130 H St NW in Suite 221 and they can be reached at 202-994-3765 or via email at gwriter@gwu.edu. You can [schedule writing center appointments](#), both in-person or by phone, in advance. Daytime and evening hours are available. Check for this semester's hours at the [writing center contact page](#). The Writing Center does offer Summer hours.

GWU Libraries

Off campus students have full access to all of the research resources, services, and assistance that the Library offers. The GW community has access to 500+ online subscription databases and to millions of items, electronic and print, in the library catalog. Off-campus students even have additional privileges because the Library will FedEx print materials to your home. For more information visit the [GW Libraries](#) homepage.

Call the Ask Us desk at 202-994-6048 or [contact someone at the library](#) to answer any questions. For questions beyond "Do you have this book/article?" and "How do I login?" use the website mentioned to make a research consultation appointment with a librarian. Librarians are there to guide students through any aspect of the research process, from selecting and narrowing a topic, crafting a research strategy to citation management.

Safety and Security

- **In an emergency:** call GWPD at 202-994-6111 or call 911
- **For situation-specific actions:** review the [Emergency Response Handbook](#)
- **In an active violence situation:** [Get Out, Hide Out or Take Out](#)
- **Stay informed:** review [notification tools for staying informed during emergency and safety related situations](#)