

The Graduate School
of Political Management

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

M.P.S. in Political Management

Spring 2017

January 17 – May 1, 2017

Crisis Management in American Politics

PMGT 6458.10

3 Credits

Tuesdays 7:10 – 9:40pm

302 MPA

BASIC INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

Instructor

Michael D. Edwards

Contact Information & Communication

Professor Edwards maintains offices near the George Washington University campus and will gladly make himself available for consultations with students during the week. In addition, students should feel free to call him with questions or concerns. He can be reached by telephone at (202) 822-7564. He can also be contacted at either of two email addresses: MEdwards@nea.org or Edwardsm@gwu.edu.

Blackboard Site

A Blackboard course site has been set up for this course. Each student is expected to check the site throughout the semester, as Blackboard will be the primary venue for outside classroom communications between the instructors and the students. Students can access the course site at <https://blackboard.gwu.edu>. Support for Blackboard is available at 202-994-4948 or helpdesk.gwu.edu.

Academic Integrity

All members of the university community are expected to exhibit honesty and competence in their academic work. Students have a special responsibility to acquaint themselves with, and make use of, all proper procedures for doing research, writing papers, and taking exams. Members of the community will be presumed to be familiar with the proper academic procedures and will be held responsible for applying them. Deliberate failure to act in accordance with such procedures will be considered academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is defined as “cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one’s own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information.” Acts of academic dishonesty are a legal, moral, and intellectual offense against the community and will be prosecuted through the proper university channels. The University Code of Academic Integrity can be found at <http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html>.

Support for Students with Disabilities

GW's Disability Support Services (DSS) provides and coordinates accommodations and other services for students with a wide variety of disabilities, as well as those temporarily disabled by injury or illness. Accommodations are available through DSS to facilitate academic access for students with disabilities. Please notify your instructor if you require accommodations. Additional information is available at www.gwu.edu/~dss.

In the Event of an Emergency or Crisis during Class

If we experience some an emergency during class time, we will try to stay in our classroom until we hear that we can move about safely. If we have to leave this site, we will meet at **Gelman Library** in order to account for everyone and to make certain that everyone is safe. Please refer to Campus Advisories for the latest information on the University's operating status: <http://www.campusadvisories.gwu.edu/>.

Attendance Policy

Preparation for, attendance at, and participation in all classes are essential elements in this course. Students are expected to be present at each class. Should a student not be able to attend a session, he/she should notify the instructors in advance and make appropriate arrangements to familiarize himself/herself with the material covered, to submit any assignments due at that time, and to receive any additional assignments that might be forthcoming from that session.

Out-of-Class/ Independent Learning Expectation

Over the course of the semester, students will spend at least 2 hours (100 minutes) per week in class. Required reading for the class meetings and written response papers or projects are expected to take up, on average, 7 hours (350 minutes) per week. Over the course of the semester, students will spend 25 hours in instructional time and 87.5 hours preparing for class.

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 any/all of the following:

Dr. Beatriz Cuartas
Deputy Director, Political Management Program
beatrizcuartas@gwu.edu | 202-994-6000

Dr. Jack Prostko
Associate Dean for Learning and Faculty Development
College of Professional Studies
jackp@gwu.edu | 202-994-3592

Suzanne Farrand
Director of Academic Administration, GSPM
sfarrand@gwu.edu | 202-994-9309

THE COURSE

Political Management Program Objectives

1. Assess a political environment, develop an appropriate strategy to achieve specified goals, and execute that strategy.
2. Draw upon a repertoire of effective communication skills and techniques for use in a political environment.
3. Collect, evaluate and incorporate relevant empirical evidence to shape, optimize, and continuously inform the developed strategy.
4. Find, engage and motivate the essential and appropriate leaders, professionals and citizens to achieve the developed strategy.
5. Recognize and work through recurring political dilemmas in a manner that upholds ethical standards in the profession and exhibits principled leadership.

Course Description and Overview

This course examines the management of crisis situations, turning points, and defining moments in contemporary electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs. It is designed to help students develop the tools and techniques necessary to predict, identify, isolate, avert, manage and even capitalize on such situations. The course will be conducted as a seminar emphasizing in-depth class participation and discussion. Through examination of recent case studies and the use of simulation exercises, it explores both the theoretical and practical aspects of crisis management in today's world.

Course Learning Objectives

1. Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs.
2. Master tools and techniques for the effective management of crisis situations.
3. Discern the reputational and electoral consequences of scandal, and develop the appropriate strategy to minimize negative effects.
4. Understand and deploy ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises and scandals.

Course Requirements

Students will be required to complete a comprehensive research, analysis, and writing assignment; one group research, analysis and presentation project; and one short assignment related to crisis identification and a second short assignment on ethical issues in a specific crisis situation. Details about the three assignments will be distributed at the second class of the semester. The components of the final class grades will be as follows: individual research and analysis project (30%); group presentation project (20%); general preparation for and participation in class discussions (30%); crisis identification assignment (10%), ethics assignment (10%).

Evaluation and Grading

Assignment	Learning Objective(s) Addressed	Due Date	Weight
Crisis Identification Memo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs. 	Feb 7	10%
Ethics Memorandum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and employ ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises 	Feb 28	10%
Group Crisis Case Study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs. Master tools and techniques for the effective management of crisis situations. Develop and employ ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises. 	March 28 April 4	20%
Individual Research & Analysis Paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand, recognize and assess crisis situations in electoral, legislative and public policy campaigns, in governmental decision-making, and in corporate affairs. Master tools and techniques for the effective management of crisis situations. Develop and employ ethical standards, judgment and behavior in addressing crises 	April 25	30%
Attendance and Participation			30%

Total			100%
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Following is the grade scale for all GSPM classes:

Grade*	Grading 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	Satisfactory work, but needs reworking and more effort. Note that although not a failing grade, at the graduate level, anything below a "B" is viewed as unacceptable.
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.

*Please note that you may be penalized for late submission of assignment(s).

Required Text and Learning Materials

- Steven Fink, Crisis Management: Planning for the Inevitable, iUniverse, 2000
- Laurence Barton, Crisis in Organizations II, South-Western College Publishing, 2001
- Harvard Business Essentials: Crisis Management, Harvard Business School Press, 2004
- Ian Mitroff, Christine Pearson, L. Katharine Harrington, The Essential Guide to Managing Corporate Crises, Oxford University Press, 1996

Additional readings will be available on reserve at the George Washington University Library or distributed by the instructor.

All reading assignments should be completed at a reasonable pace throughout the term with the caveat that students should be prepared to discuss each assignment at the class at which it is scheduled for discussion.

Students should also be familiar with recent American political history and are encouraged to review books and related materials regarding U.S. Presidential campaigns in the post-World War II era.

Optional Supplemental Text and Learning Materials

- Harvard Business Review on Crisis Management, Harvard Business School Press, 2000
- Ian Mitroff, Managing Crises Before They Happen, AMACOM, 2001
- Ian Mitroff and Thierry Pauchant, We're So Big and Powerful Nothing Bad Can Happen To Us, Birch Lane Books, New York, 1990
- Larry Sabato, Feeding Frenzy: How Attack Journalism Has Transformed American Politics, Lanahan Publishing, 2000
- Alan Schroeder, Presidential Debates: Forty Years of High-Risk TV, Columbia University Press, New York, 2000

Tentative Course Calendar*

*Professor Edwards 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.

Week 1: January 17

Overview -- Crisis Management in American Politics

Introduction to crisis management in the electoral, legislative, and issue management arenas. Overview of the material to be covered. Discussion of the required readings, assignments, and course projects.

Week 2: January 24

Anatomy of a Crisis

Overview of the theoretical and practical aspects of crises and crisis management in the political world. Exploration of the differences between crises and turning points in the political realm and those in corporate, international, and public policy settings. Discussion of the dynamics of crisis management including the nature and stages of crises, participant behavior in crisis situations, and the impact of the crisis environment on decision-making in campaigns and in legislative advocacy. Examination of the potential opportunities and benefits presented by crises.

Crisis Identification Memo assigned.

Week 3: January 31

Scandal

An examination of scandals in American politics and their impact on governing institutions, parties, elections, and those participants embroiled in scandal. Understanding the role of the media in scandals, discern the types of scandals, and gauging the varying severity of their likely effects. Exploration of potential strategies to minimize, exploit, or manage a scandal. Consideration of the ethical dimensions associated with political scandals.

Read (on Blackboard):

- John B. Thompson, "What is a Scandal" in *Political Scandal: Power and Visibility in the Media Age*, Polity Publishing, 2000, pp: 11-30.

- Lara M. Brown, "It's Good to Be An Incumbent: Scandals, Corruption, and the 2006 Midterm Election," in *Extension of Remarks*, vol. 30, no. 1 (January 2007).
- Alison Dagnes and Janet Smith, "The Politics, Geography, and Constituencies of Political Sex Scandals," in *Sex Scandals in American Politics*, edited by Alison Dagnes, Continuum Publishing, 2011, pp: 62-93.

Group Project Teams formed.

Week 4: February 7

Decision-Making in a Crisis Environment (1)

Exploration of the organizational dynamics and decision-making processes in the legislative/political environment. Practical and theoretical approaches to participant behavior in crisis situations. Examination of organizational dysfunction during crises.

Crisis Identification Memorandum due.
Ethics Memorandum assigned

Week 5: February 14

Decision-Making in a Crisis Environment (2)

Discussion of internal operations and structure, stakeholder relationships, internal information flow, and response capabilities. Exploration of adversarial responses to crisis situations and actions. Approaches to risk assessment and crisis planning.

Individual Research & Analysis paper topic due.

Week 6: February 21

The Ethics of Crisis Management

An exploration of the ethical issues raised in confronting crises. Developing a framework for ethical decision-making and behavior in crisis situations. Approaches to addressing dilemmas in crisis management in ways that uphold ethical standards. In-depth discussion of the multiple crisis situations presented in the film, *Wag the Dog*.

Prior to Class:

Watch the film *Wag the Dog* (here's the trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNo0BicRM8k>) and read/consult the screenplay at: <http://www.imsdb.com/scripts/Wag-the-Dog.html>

Week 7: February 28

The Media and the Crisis

Discussion of the mass media and crisis management in the political and corporate worlds. How the media covers crisis situations and affects the crisis environment. Examination of the increasing personalization of politics by the media. Problems of episodic coverage. The rise of fake news and its consequences. The impact of the media on crisis management strategies and tactics.

Ethics Memorandum due

Week 8: March 7

Crisis Communications

Exploration of communications and public relations tactics and strategies in crisis -- and potential crisis -- situations. Discussion of crafting of communications action plans; message development and delivery; advertising approaches; government and community relations activities; media, press and public relations efforts.

Week 9: March 21

Debates

Discussion of the role candidate debates play as a turning point in electoral campaigns, the impact of media on debates, debate preparation and follow-through. Negotiating the terms and conditions of political debates

Week 10: March 28

Case Studies in Crisis Management

Presentation of student group projects

Week 11: April 4

Case Studies in Crisis Management

Presentation of student group projects

Week 12: April 11

Negative Advertising

Examination of the dynamics and impact of negative advertising in electoral politics today. Discussion of effective strategies to respond to negative advertising

Week 13: April 25

Planning for the Inevitable

Examination of the tools and techniques for identifying, preventing, managing, and capitalizing on crisis situations. Discussion of strategic planning and crisis forecasting, crisis management plans, organizational structure, crisis aversion and response tactics.

Individual Research and Analysis Project due.

Read (On Blackboard):

- Michael Edwards, “The Essentials of Crisis Management” Campaigns and Elections, November 15, 2013

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