PR 568: Crisis Management in Strategic Public Relations
3 units

Fall 2022 – Thursdays – 6:30-9 p.m.
Section: 21560D
Location: ANN 209

Instructor: Megan Jordan
Office: ANN lobby or classroom
Office Hours: By Appointment
Contact Info: meganjor@usc.edu

I. Course Description
This semester, we offer this special version of Crisis Management in Strategic Public Relations that focuses on theories, concepts and practices in risk assessment, issues monitoring, and crisis anticipation/management in a wide variety of organizational context, and from multiple perspectives.

Throughout the course, students will learn key concepts and tools to enable them to develop skills across the crisis PR landscape. Students will:

- Review crisis scenarios and strategize solutions that they themselves would put in motion situation dependent
- Develop crisis plans and gain an understanding of crisis response structures and roles
- Prepare to act as a spokesperson in the event of a crisis
- Discuss the meaning of 'cancel culture' and how this now plays a role in all crisis communication aspects
- Engage with leading figures in the PR and Communications fields as they offer tips and highlights from their own experiences

II. Overall Learning Objectives and Assessment
By the end of this course, students will be able to:
- Assess crisis situations and their implications for communication
- Examine crisis management in a systematic, disciplined way with additional tools to help them in their chosen career path
- Conduct crisis diagnosis and develop necessary analytical skills
- Apply advanced crisis communication principles to design their own specific crisis management strategies and plans

III. Assignments

Participation in Class Discussions
It is important to attend class and actively participate, since class activities and interaction with peers encourage creative dialogue and diversity of perspective, which helps enhance your learning. It is expected that students will come to class having read the materials and be prepared to join class discussions, contributing questions and comments. We will incorporate the case method as part of our instructional tools. In these case discussions, students will put themselves in the shoes of an executive and take a position on what you to do. Meaningful participation in the discussion will require thorough and thoughtful reading of the assigned materials.

Essays
There will be two written assignments. The initial project will be based around a crisis that has deeply caught the student's attention - what they felt worked, what they felt did not; how they would improve the work already done as well as ideas for the public rehabilitation of the individual or company that went through this scenario.

The second will be the art of the apology, choosing a well-known crisis that has already taken place, write the apology that will be issued to media including ideas on which outlet to place it in.

<u>Midterm</u>
A great deal of crisis PR is thinking on your feet - not always having time to sit down and strategize. For this portion, the midterm will be student vs. professor participating in a mock Q&A scenario in which the student is counseling a "client" for a crisis they are part of. This will require using skills learned in class to answer tough questions of the client, providing them guidance and support as well as counseling the client's existing management team. Students will also participate in a Mock Q&A with a "journalist," responding on behalf of their client using background information they have drafted, and if appropriate, issuing on-the-spot apology statements. This will be done one-on-one and not in a group setting - via Zoom or face-to-face in the classroom.

<u>Final Project</u>
Each group will give a final presentation and will submit a corresponding paper on their findings.

The student will be grouped and together will manufacture their own crisis scenarios, draft messaging for client review, research outlets and specific reporters to go to for proactive media and deliver a comprehensive plan that enables them to be able to control their client's narrative. The group will cover all aspects of crisis and media management from print, TV, social and SEO, making solid, and confident, decisions on possible statements as well as on and off the record messaging. The group will deliver a plan for a crisis management campaign from start to finish using all the knowledge learnt during this course.

IV. Grading
a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Class Participation	150	15%
Essays (two)	200	20%
Midterm	300	30%
Final	350	35%
TOTAL	**1000**	**100%**

b. Grading Scale

95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 94%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards
Public Relations

"A" projects have writing near professional quality; one or no mistakes; clearly proofread and edited material. Conducted professional quality crisis diagnosis. Excellent organization and flow; original thinking. Demonstrated comprehension and application of crisis management principles.
"B" projects have two to five spelling, grammar mistakes.   One or more required diagnostic elements missing. Included application of most crisis management principles discussed in class.

"C" projects have more than five errors (spelling, grammar)). Limited demonstration of crisis diagnosis. Showed some grasp of crisis management principles.
"**D" projects** have more than 10 errors (spelling, grammar). Showed little understanding of crisis management principles or ability to diagnose a crisis.
"F" projects are not high enough quality to show a supervisor or client, were submitted late or not turned in.

V. Assignment Submission Policy
A. All assignments are due on the dates specified. Lacking prior discussion and agreement with the instructor, late assignments will a full grade deduction for each day they are late.
B. Assignments must be submitted via email to the instructor in a Microsoft Word document or Microsoft PowerPoint file. The naming convention for the electronic file is PR 508-USC ID-Assignment number; example: PR 508-1234567890-A1.
C. All papers must be footnoted as appropriate, with a source page at the end as appropriate.

VI. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials
A. Required Readings will be dependent on relevant news cycles and crises in the media and will change from week to week.

VII. Laptop Policy
All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the **Annenberg Digital Lounge** for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's **Information Technology Services** website.

VIII. Add/Drop Dates for Session 001 (15 weeks: 8/22/22 – 12/2/22)
Link: https://classes.usc.edu/term-20223/calendar/
Friday, September 9: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," except for Monday-only classes, and receive a refund for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to change enrollment option to audit for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001
Friday, September 9: Last day to purchase or waive tuition refund insurance for fall
Tuesday, September 13: Last day to add or drop a Monday-only class without a mark of "W" and receive a refund or change to Pass/No Pass or Audit for Session 001
Friday, October 7: Last day to drop a course without a mark of "W" on the transcript for Session 001. Mark of "W" will still appear on student record and STARS report and tuition charges still apply. [Please drop any course by the end of week three (or the 20 percent mark of the session) to avoid tuition charges.]
Friday, November 11: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

IX. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown
Important note to students: *Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability.*

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable/ Due Dates
Week 1 Date: 8/25	**Course Overview and Basic Concepts** • Personal Introductions • Introduction to crisis and the definition in respect to PR	• **Read**: Latest crisis scenarios from the news	

Week 2 **Date: 9/1**	**Crisis Management Structures** • Introduction to crisis management organizational structures	• **Read**: Link provided to FEMA Incident Command System Training for Public Information Officers	
Week 3 **Date: 9/8**	**Crisis Management** • Going through initial crisis scenarios • How the crisis comes in • First steps • How to decipher facts • Background Points • Projected longevity of crisis and possible issues you/the client/the management team face	• **Assignment**: Find a crisis situation over the last two years that caught your attention, read this and formulate a tentative plan as to how you would have executed better from a crisis PR perspective - what worked, what did not work.	
Week 4 **Date: 9/15**	**Crisis Scenario Planning** • Present individual findings • Class discussion • Guest speaker	• **Read**: TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	
Week 5 **Date: 9/22**	**FUD Campaigns** • Case Studies: Herbalife, Coachella • Class discussion • Group projects	• **Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News	
Week 6 **Date: 9/29**	**Client Management** • Case study: TBD • In-class group work on the assigned client • Managing expectations, lining up third party validators, preparing statements, social media plans • Understanding crisis verbiage	• **Watch:** Watch clips of news interviews where an executive was in the hot seat. Examples will be shared of both good/bad interviews.	
Week 7 **Date: 10/6**	**Midterm Presentation** • One-on-one mock interviews based on assigned crisis		Midterm
Week 8 **Date: 10/13**	**FALL RECESS**	**NO CLASS**	
Week 9 **Date: 10/20**	**Legal Coordination** • Introduction to working with legal representation, the importance of privilege and not ending up further in the mud than you already are • Guest speaker: TBD	**Read**: Legal Case Study	

Week 10 **Date: 10/27**	**Cancel Culture** • Crisis Cases in both the US/UK • In-class group work • Social media herd mentality, virality online, old tweets, etc. • Guest speaker: TBD	• **Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	
Week 11 **Date: 11/3**	**Corporate/Large Scale Crises** • Crisis case: Corporate crisis • In-class group work on the assigned crisis • Guest speaker: TBD	• **Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	
Week 12 **Date: 11/10**	**Individual Crises** • Crisis case: Entertainment crisis • In-class group work on the assigned crisis • Guest speaker: TBD	• Read: TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	
Week 13 **Date: 11/17**	**The Art of the Apology** • Crisis case: TBD • In-class group work on the assigned crisis • Guest speaker: TBD	• **Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle • **Assignment**: Choose a well-known crisis involving an individual and write the apology that will be issued to media including which outlet(s) to place it in.	
Week 14 **11/24**	**HAPPY THANKSGIVING**	**NO CLASS**	
Week 15 **Date: 12/1**	**Clean-Up Crew** • In-class group work on the assigned crisis • Letting time pass, Search Engine Optimization, Winning Back Support (Brands, Fans, etc.), • Guest speaker: TBD	**Read**: TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	Class evaluations
Week 16 **Final Exam** **Period** **Date: 12/8,** **7-9 p.m.**	**Final Presentation** • Presentation and in-class discussion • The students will be grouped and together will manufacture their own crisis scenarios, draft messaging for client review, research outlets and specific reporters to go to for proactive media and deliver a comprehensive plan that enables them to be able to control their client's narrative. The group will		Final paper and presentation due

	cover all aspects of crisis and media management from print, TV, social and SEO, making solid, and confident, decisions on possible statements as well as on and off the record messaging. The group will deliver a plan for a crisis management campaign from start to finish using all the knowledge learnt during this course.		

X. Policies and Procedures

Internships

The value of professional internships as part of the overall educational experience of our students has long been recognized by the School of Journalism. Accordingly, while internships are not required for successful completion of this course, any student enrolled in this course that undertakes and completes an approved, non-paid internship during this semester shall earn academic extra credit herein of an amount equal to 1 percent of the total available semester points for this course. To receive instructor approval, a student must request an internship letter from the Annenberg Career Development Office and bring it to the instructor to sign by the end of the third week of classes. The student must submit the signed letter to the media organization, along with the evaluation form provided by the Career Development Office. The form should be filled out by the intern supervisor and returned to the instructor at the end of the semester. No credit will be given if an evaluation form is not turned into the instructor by the last day of class. Note: The internship must by unpaid and can only be applied to one journalism or public relations class.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

a. Academic Conduct

Plagiarism

Presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words - is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* (https://policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b/). Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct (http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/).

USC School of Journalism Policy on Academic Integrity

The following is the USC Annenberg School of Journalism's policy on academic integrity and repeated in the syllabus for every course in the school:

"Since its founding, the USC School of Journalism has maintained a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found plagiarizing, fabricating, cheating on examinations, and/or purchasing papers or other assignments faces sanctions ranging from an 'F' on the assignment to dismissal from the School of Journalism. All academic integrity violations will be reported to the office of Student Judicial Affairs & Community Standards (SJACS), as per university policy, as well as journalism school administrators."

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself, and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call
suicidepreventionlifeline.org
Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call
studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED) - (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298
https://eeotix.usc.edu/
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office of Equity and Diversity |Title IX for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services - (213) 740-0776
osas.usc.edu
Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/note takers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710
uscsa.usc.edu
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101
diversity.usc.edu
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-120 – 24/7 on call
dps.usc.edu
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund
https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund
https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

XI. About Your Instructor

Megan Jordan is the Chief Communications Officer at PLBY Group, the parent company of Playboy, where she leads corporate positioning for the transformation of the iconic brand and the company's business model from a media and licensing company to a consumer lifestyle brand with billions in consumer spend on its fashion and accessories products in more than 180 countries.

For more than 25 years she has led communications for global organizations and clients, protecting and defending leaders' and corporate reputations. In these roles she was responsible for defining the companies' communications strategies, overseeing internal and external communications, social media, content and creative teams, thought leadership, and advertising.

She led communications for Herbalife Nutrition through a billion-dollar activist investor battle that played out in the headlines; was a regional communications leader through public health issues and union strikes for Kaiser Permanente; and directed communications through a fatal workplace shooting, radiation leak at a nuclear plant, congressional hearings, and multiple fatalities of members of the public for Southern California Edison.

Jordan also spent more than a dozen years in leadership roles with international public relations agencies MSL Group, Cohn & Wolfe and Zeno where she directed PR campaigns to rebrand Hilton Hotels, launch the Volt for General Motors, and launch products for Nestle USA, while also helping her clients through countless crises including product recalls, customer fatalities, and backlash from environmental advocacy organizations.

Jordan is a member of the Board of Advisors for the School of Public Relations for the University's Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism, previously taught Environmental Communications as an adjunct professor for Annenberg, and is a regular contributor to Annenberg's annual Relevance Report. She is a member of the Arthur W. Page Society. Megan completed her Bachelor's in Public Relations at USC and her Master's in Mass Communications from California State University, Northridge.