Fall 2023 – Tuesdays – 6:30-9 p.m.
Section: 21560D
Location: ASC 328

Instructor: Megan Jordan
Office: ASC 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 – please note that this is 20% of your grade, since crisis management involves talking through scenarios, building skills through discussion and repetition, class activities and interaction with peers. This encourages 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 (pre-midterm) 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 (post-midterm) will be the art of the apology, choosing a crisis that has already taken place or is currently playing out, write the apology statement that will be issued to media including ideas on which outlet to target for placement.

<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. Appointments will be scheduled for the midterm.

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

The students will choose groups by topic 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 best 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 learned during this course.

All assignments should be submitted via Blackboard or by email to meganjor@usc.edu.

IV. Grading
a. Breakdown of Grade

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

b. Grading Scale

Letter grades and corresponding point value ranges.

Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range		
95% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+ (D plus)
90% to 94%: A- (A minus)	77% to 79%: C+ (C plus)	64% to 66%: D

87% to 89%: B+ (B plus)	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D- (D minus)
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C- (C minus)	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: 8/21/23 – 12/1/23)
August 18: Last day to register and add classes for Session 001
September 8: Last day to drop a class without a mark of "W," and receive a refund for Session 001
Oct. 6: Last day to change a Pass/No Pass to a letter grade for Session 001
Oct. 6: Last day to add or drop a class without a mark of "W"
November 10: Last day to drop a class with a mark of "W" for Session 001

Important Reference Links:
PR Schedule – https://classes.usc.edu/term-20233/classes/pr
Final Exam Schedule – https://classes.usc.edu/term-20233/finals/
Registration Calendar – https://classes.usc.edu/term-20233/calendar/

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.*

(See table below)

	Topics/Daily Activities	Readings/Homework	Deliverables/ Due Dates
Week 1 **Date: 8/22**	**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: 8/29**	**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: 9/5**	**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	• **Paper #1/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: 9/12**	**Crisis Scenario Planning** • Present individual findings • Class discussion • Guest speaker	• **Read**: TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	Paper #1 Due
Week 5 **Date: 9/19**	**Media Training** • Review best practices • Watch a Public Information Officer in action • Conduct role playing • Learn how to bridge messaging	• **Watch:** Watch clips of news interviews where an executive was in the hot seat. Examples will be shared of both good/bad interviews.	
Week 6 **Date: 9/26**	**Client Management** • Case study: TBD • In-class group work on the assigned client • Managing expectations, lining up third party validators, preparing statements, social media	• **Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News	

	plans • Understanding crisis verbiage		
Week 7 Date: 10/3	**Midterm Presentation** • One-on-one mock interviews based on assigned crisis		Midterm By Appointment
Week 8 Date: 10/10	**FUD Campaigns** • Case Studies: Herbalife, Coachella • Class discussion • Group projects	**Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	
Week 9 Date: 10/17	**The Art of the Apology** • Crisis case: TBD • In-class group work on the assigned crisis • Guest speaker: TBD	**Paper #2/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 10 Date: 10/24	**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	Paper #2 due
Week 11 Date: 10/31	**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: 11/7	**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: 11/14	**Cancel Culture** • Review of Crisis Cases in multiple countries • In-class group work • Social media herd	• **Read:** TBD Article(s) Dependent on News Cycle	

	mentality, virality online, old tweets, etc. • Guest speaker: TBD		
Week 14 **11/21**	**Reputation Tracking & Analytics** • Tutorial on the use of media and social media analytics • In-class group work using the latest technology to analyze the impact of a crisis on a brand using data and analytics as well as listening tools	• <u>**Read:**</u> Review PR industry awards and case studies	
Week 15 **Date: 11/28**	**LAST DAY OF CLASS** **Clean-Up Crew** • In-class group work on the assigned crisis • Letting time pass, Search Engine Optimization, Winning Back Support (Brands, Fans, etc.)		Class evaluations
Week 16 **Final Exam Period** **Date:** **12/12, 7-9 p.m.**	**Final Presentation** • Presentation and in-class discussion • The students will be grouped by topic 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		Final paper and presentation due

	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

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Artificial Intelligence
In this course, you may use artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs to help you with assignments that indicate the permitted use of AI. You should also be aware that AI text generation tools may present incorrect information, biased responses, and incomplete analyses; thus they are not yet prepared to produce text that meets the standards of this course. To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material (e.g., text, images, etc.) included or referenced in your work and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Using an AI tool to generate content without proper attribution will be treated as plagiarism and reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on how and when to use AI Generators for your submissions. Please be aware that in a true crisis situation you will likely not have the time

required to fact check AI-generated work and it may slow you down. I do not recommend it for crisis communications to the develop the end product but it may be helpful to you as you research crises scenarios.

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/). The use of ChatGPT in development of papers or presentations must be disclosed, along with prompts used.

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.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

b. Support Systems
USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - *(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*

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

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - (213) 740-5086
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.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - (213) 740-0776
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - (213) 740-0411
Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
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
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) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

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.

XI. About Your Instructor

Megan Jordan is the Chief Strategic Communications Officer at Claremont McKenna College where she leads communications, marketing and public affairs for the College. Prior, she was the Chief Communications Officer for PLBY Group, the parent company of Playboy, where she led crisis and reputation management, and corporate positioning for the transformation of the iconic brand and the company's business model. This involved evolving the brand 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 Jordan has led communications for global organizations and clients, navigating countless crisis, protecting and defending leaders' and corporate reputations, and helping businesses recover post-crisis. 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, marketing, and advertising.

She led communications for Herbalife Nutrition through a billion-dollar activist investor battle that played out in the headlines; navigated deals with business partners, patent infringement litigation, and product launches for a global bioscience company; served as 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 support the rebranding of Hilton Hotels, launching the Volt for General Motors, and introducing new 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 in addition to Crisis Management 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.