MPACS 620 SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE: LEADERSHIP AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION: A RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Spring 2013; Conrad Grebel University College—University of Waterloo
May 6-17, Every day, M-F, 9:00a.m.—12:00p.m.
Board Room, Rm 1301, Conrad Grebel University College

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The mission of Conrad Grebel University College is “to seek wisdom, nurture faith and pursue justice and peace in service to church and society.” Visit us at www.grebel.ca

Overview: MPACS 620: Leadership & Crisis Communication is an interdisciplinary graduate level course in Arts that will examine how leaders who are experiencing crisis communicate to repair their image. This course will emphasize the special rhetorical characteristics and constraints of crisis communication and the leadership demands, especially the damage-repair strategies, necessary to restore image and corporate identity in the heat of chaos. Critical frameworks on rhetoric, leadership and crisis from classical and contemporary rhetorical theory will be the focus in week one. A case study approach to leaders crafting response to crisis will dominate week two.

Uniqueness of Course: This course operates differently by design from the traditional graduate offerings at Grebel and Waterloo. Here are some of its unique features: 1) It meets everyday for three hours over the course of two weeks! So, daily attendance is mandatory; 2) It carries the same amount of academic credit as a regular full-term course. So, “strap on your seat belt.” To maintain academic integrity, we are processing nearly the same amount of material in two weeks as thirteen weeks. As an intense, fast-paced course, it is imperative that you keep up with the readings and assignments. 3) As your instructor, it is my job to cover a broad range of material in an organized and connected way, while at the same time make sure the pacing is not so overwhelming as to work against deep learning and quality performance. This may necessitate a few tailored individual instructional sessions outside of class. 4) It is an elective course that caters primarily to students in our new professionally designed MPACS program. The topics of this course: communication, conflict-management and leadership are central to the peace and conflict studies discipline and offering courses in new formats and time slots for mature students and working professionals is important. All admitted MPACS students may enroll. Other graduate students in the Faculty of Arts, such as English/Rhetoric, may also enroll.

Objectives:
1. Students will learn how to critique rhetorical acts of apologia (image repair and policy restoration discourse) from a variety of classical and contemporary rhetorical perspectives.
2. Students will come to understand why crisis communication continues to evolve, and grow in influence in democratic “civil societies” in our world today.
3. Students will gain appreciation for the special rhetorical leadership skills necessary in today’s complex 24/7 media environment to position institutions and movements to survive and thrive in the heat of uncertainty, transition and crisis.
4. Student will demonstrate analytical writing, historical research, articulate oral presentation, and small group discussion and listening skills appropriate at the graduate level.
Specifically, this course has several purposes built into units and assignments:

- to study the special rhetorical markers of apologia and trace its evolution as a genre of speech from classical times to the present (Report I)
- to demarcate the prevailing perspectives on leadership, with an emphasis on the rhetorical perspective (Leadership profile story)
- to account for the upsurge in leadership accountability, transparency, and reputational management and its corresponding rhetoric of self-defense (class participation and small group exercises)
- to explicate and evaluate “landmark” apologia discourse and compare to contemporary case studies (Report I)
- to apply various critical frameworks to the apologia campaigns of leaders in crisis (Case Study Paper)
- to debate the ethical questions that demands of public accountability inevitably raise. (class participation and group exercises)

To accomplish these purposes, required course readings will draw from scholarly works in the fields of speech communication, business management, public relations leadership studies, and philosophy. All readings available on electronic reserve, Milton Good Library, Conrad Grebel University College. Asterisks readings (*) are assigned to individual students as part of report assignments. All other readings are required by all students.

The course will be segmented into five units:

I. Foundational Disciplinary Concepts of Communication and Crisis
II. Foundational Perspectives on Leadership
III. Classical Rhetorical Theory of Apologia
IV. Contemporary Rhetorical Theory of Apologia
V. Case Studies of Leaders in Crisis: Analysis of Apologia in Context

A Word on the Seminar Experience:
Unlike the standard course, a seminar is designed to examine a specific and compelling subject with more thoroughness, invite increased student participation, and progress according to students’ needs and interests. Hence, it is important that you be in class regularly, contribute in meaningful ways to the subject under discussion, and provide input on the shape of the course. However, the general expectations of a seminar are similar to other courses in that work is expected on the date for which it is assigned. Failure to complete any portion of the course comes with standard grade penalties, but also includes an added consequence: a public apologia (damage control speech) on your part—as image repair discourse is the subject of our seminar! We will all enjoy this. 😊 Which reminds me: Did I mention that a seminar is supposed to be fun?

Academic Honesty
In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. Consult www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/ for more information.

Disability Services
For students with disabilities, the Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD) located in Needles Hall, Rm 1132, collaborates with all academic units to arrange appropriate accommodations. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each term. See http://www.studentservices.uwaterloo.ca/disabilities/.
Requirements:

1. **Regular attendance and informed participation** in class discussions, group activities, reading prompts and reflections, and communication activities each day.

2. **Leadership Story Speech** to create virtual experience and alter perception about the variety of leaders and the diversity of their ability to guide, legitimize, unify and excite others. 2-3 minutes. Students choose a leader to describe and tell a story about. Separate instructions distributed in-class. **May 8. Due Date.**

3. **Report I: Descriptive Analysis of “Touchstone” Apologia** to explain the rhetorical choices used by a famous leader facing crisis. Assignments made in class based on a “top touchstone” apologia list. Substitutions negotiable. 5-7 minutes. Plus handout. Separate instructions distributed in class. **May 9. Due Date.**

4. **Report II: Summary Apologia Theory & Application Lecture** to explain a particular theory and how it helps us understand and evaluate the rhetorical success of a leader’s image repair efforts. Assignments made in class to cover the primary classical and contemporary theoretical perspectives on apologia. 5-7 minutes. Plus handout. Separate instructions distributed in class. **Due Dates in Flights: May 10, 13, 14, 15,**

5. **Crisis Communication Case Study Paper** to create virtual experience, alter perception, explain and formulate belief around a particular leader in crisis case study. Students will choose a crisis communication case for analysis. Topics must be related to leaders facing real crisis. Students have a range of possibilities from which to choose. Additional instructions will detail the requirements of the paper, but students should conceptualize the project as a culmination of the semester’s learning, including: (1) a biographical sketch of the leader and the institution, organization, or movement s/he serves; (2) an historical tracing and a rhetorical assessment of the crisis; (2) an analysis guided by appropriate theory of the leader’s response to crisis (apologia) in terms of its conformance to crisis damage control “rules”; (3) an assessment (effects, aesthetics, truth, ethics, comparison to other cases) of the success or failure of the leader’s ability to repair his/her tarnished image and that of the organization he/she leads; 10-12 pages, excluding visuals, tables, appendices and bibliography. **May 20-25. Due Date.**

6. **Crisis Communication Case Study Presentation** to introduce your case in a compelling narrative and outline the highlights of each segment of your paper to the class. Students will give a timed 10-minute oral presentation of the crisis case study that they have chosen to investigate over the course of the condensed semester. Students are expected to present an interesting, well-organized, and practiced presentation of their findings. Presentations will take place during the last class period. A short (2-3 min.) question-answer period from the class will follow each presentation. Students are encouraged to use visual aids including electronic support (PowerPoint, audio, video, Web, etc.). **May 17. Due Date.**

Student Assessment

1. **Attendance & Informed Participation** 20%
2. **Rhetorical Leadership Profile Story** 10%
3. **Report I** 10%
4. **Report II** 10%
5. **Oral Report of Term Project: Crisis Case** 20%
6. **FINAL CASE STUDY PAPER:**
   **RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF APOLOGIA: LEADERS RESPOND TO CRISIS** 30%
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TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

Day 1: May 6

UNIT 1: FOUNDATIONAL DISCIPLINARY CONCEPTS OF COMMUNICATION & CRISIS

TOPICS: Introduction to the Course. Key Definitions, Concepts and Foundational Perspectives on Symbolic Motives, Identification, Rhetoric, Criticism, Crisis, Apologia, and Leadership. All assignments previewed.

READINGS:


ASSIGNMENTS:

Students will familiarize themselves with Milton Good Library, Conrad Grebel University College, access all electronic readings for the two week course, and begin preliminary investigation on what case study topics they would like to pursue and what materials are ready available. Complete all readings for Day 1 and 2.

Day 2: May 7

Unit II: FOUNDATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP

TOPICS: Introduction to the five principle leadership perspectives; Guest lecture TBA; Exercises in leadership. Special challenges of leaders facing crisis.

READINGS:

Executive Summary of Five prevailing Leadership Perspectives. (class handout)


ASSIGNMENTS:

Students prepare for Leadership Profile Story; Complete all readings for Day 3; Select a speech to study for Report I: Descriptive Analysis of Touchstone Apologia.

Day 3: May 8

Unit III: Classical Rhetorical Theory

TOPICS: Landmark Apologia Speeches: Assignments for Report I (below); Readings for Key Classical Rhetorical Theories of Leadership; Topics for Case Study Papers Selected; Delivery of Leadership Profile Speeches

READINGS:


* = one student is assigned this reading
ASSIGNMENTS:

LEADERSHIP PROFILE STORYTELLING SPEECH. Crisis Comm. Case Study Selected. One Page Prospectus turned in. All readings for Day 4 completed. Individual meetings with instructor after class, TBA.

| Day 4: May 9 |

UNIT III CONTINUED: CLASSICAL RHETORICAL THEORY OF APOLOGIA

TOPICS: Applications of classical rhetorical theory to crisis communication; what role does ethics play in image-repair discourse? Class exercises. Guest Speaker, TBA.

READINGS:


ASSIGNMENTS:

REPORT I: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF TOUCHSTONE APOLOGIA. All readings for Day 5. Assignments made for Report II: Summary Apologia Theory and Application; Individual Meetings with Instructor after class, TBA.

| Day 5: May 10 |

Unit IV: CONTEMPORARY RHETORICAL THEORY OF APOLOGIA

TOPICS: Contemporary Rhetorical Theories of Leaders in Crisis: Part 1 of 4; class exercises; Report I: Flight #1; Inventory and Assessment of Week 1

READINGS:


FLIGHT #1: Report II. *=one student is assigned this reading


**ASSIGNMENT:**

**FLIGHT #1 REPORT II.** All readings for Day 6. Research on Crisis Case Study Paper and Oral Presentation.

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**Day 6: May 13**

**UNIT V: CASE STUDIES OF LEADERS IN CRISIS: ANALYSIS OF APOLOGIA IN CONTEXT**

**TOPIC:** Contemporary Rhetorical Theory of Apologia continued. Case study examinations of leaders in crisis.

**READINGS:**


Flight #2 Reports: *=*one student is assigned this reading


**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**FLIGHT #2 REPORT II.** Preparation for Oral Presentation and Crisis Comm Paper.

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**Day 7: May 14**

**UNIT V: CASE STUDIES OF LEADERS IN CRISIS: ANALYSIS OF APOLOGIA IN CONTEXT**

**TOPICS:** Guest Lecture, TBA. Continue case study examination of leaders in crisis and contemporary rhetorical theory application to apologia

**READINGS:**

Flight #3: *=*one student is assigned this reading


ASSIGNMENTS:

FLIGHT #3 REPORT II. Preparation continues on oral presentation and crisis case study paper.

Day 8: May 15

UNIT V: CASE STUDIES OF LEADERS IN CRISIS: ANALYSIS OF APOLOGIA IN CONTEXT

TOPICS: Continue case study examination of leaders in crisis and contemporary rhetorical theory application to apologia

READINGS:

FLIGHT #4: *=one student is assigned this reading


ASSIGNMENTS:

FLIGHT #4 REPORT II. Preparation continues on oral presentation and crisis case study paper

Day 9: May 16

UNIT V: CASE STUDIES OF LEADERS IN CRISIS: ANALYSIS OF APOLOGIA IN CONTEXT

TOPICS: Summary of case studies of leaders in crisis: Analysis of apologia in context; Review of all units of course; “Diagnostic Assessment” of course materials and their application to oral presentation and crisis communication case study. Peer review of term projects.

READINGS: None

ASSIGNMENTS: Preparation continues on oral presentation and crisis case study paper.

DAY 10: MAY 17

ASSIGNMENT: ORAL PRESENTATION OF CRISIS CASE STUDIES. Note: Early start to class depending on class size.

Final Due Date for Crisis Case Papers: May 20-25th.