MPACS 620 [Sec. 002] SPECIAL TOPICS COURSE: LEADERSHIP AND CRISIS COMMUNICATION: A RHETORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Fall 2014; Conrad Grebel University College—University of Waterloo
Tuesday Night (9 times) Sept.—Dec. 6:00p.m.—9:45p.m.
Seminar Room, Rm 2201, Conrad Grebel University College

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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 foundations focus. A case study approach to leaders crafting response to crisis will be the methodological focus.

Uniqueness of Course: This course operates differently by design from the traditional graduate offerings. Here are some of its unique features: 1) It meets for close to 4 hours on 3 of the Tuesday nights each month from Sept.-November. So, attendance on these 9 dates 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 the same amount of material in 9 weeks as 13 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 Grebel’s 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. Students will demonstrate analytical writing, historical research, articulate oral presentation, and small group discussion and listening skills appropriate at the graduate level.
Requirements:

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

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. Due Date: Sept. 30

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. Due Date: Oct 7

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: Oct. 21, 28; Nov. 4

5. Crisis Communication Case Study Paper to creative 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; (3) an analysis guided by appropriate theory of the leader’s response to crisis (apologia) in terms of its conformance to crisis damage control “rules”; (4) 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. Due Date: Dec. 2

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, photographs, Websites, props, costumes, etc.). Due Date: Nov. 25th

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%


**ASSIGNMENTS:**

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

| Week 3: Sept. 30; 6:00p.m.—9:45p.m. |

**Unit II: THEORIES: 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

ASSIGNMENT:

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

Week 6: Oct. 28; 6:00p.m.—9:45p.m.

UNIT III: CASE STUDIES: CONTEXTUAL & CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSES OF LEADERS IN CRISIS

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.

Week 7: Nov. 4; 6:00p.m.—9:45p.m.

UNIT III: CASE STUDIES: CONTEXTUAL & CROSS-SECTIONAL ANALYSES OF LEADERS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN CRISIS

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
