

SAFE/COMM 786: Risk Communication--3credits

Room: Minard 346	Time: 5:00 – 7:30 Mondays
Instructor: Timothy Sellnow	E-mail: Tim.Sellnow@ndsu.nodak.edu
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Catalog description: This class explores the relationship between communication strategies and the process of risk perception, assessment and management.

Goals: After successfully completing this course, students should be able to (a) identify multiple audiences associated with risk, (b) characterize the nature and forms of risk, (c) identify appropriate means of risk calculation, and (d) match appropriate communication strategies with various forms of risk.

Academic honesty: All work in this course must be completed in a manner consistent with NDSU University Senate Policy, Section 335: Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct. <http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm>

Special Needs: Any students who need special accommodations for learning or who have special needs are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor as soon as possible.

Texts:

- 1) Perrow, C. (1999). *Normal accidents: Living with high-risk technologies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
- 2) Sauer, B. (2003). *The rhetoric of risk: Technical documentation in hazardous environments*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- 3) Langer, E. J. (1989). *Minfulness*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.
- 4) Talbott, S., & Chanda, N. (2001). *The age of terror: America and the World after September 11*. New York: Basic Books.
- 5) Additional readings will be assigned

Grading:

Reaction Papers.....	10 @ 2 points =	20 points
Quarterly Reports.....	4 @ 20 points =	80 points
Risk Manuscript.....	1 @ 100 points =	<u>100 points</u>
	Total:	200 points

Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale: A = 92%, B = 85%, C = 78 %, D = 71%

Assignment Descriptions:

Reaction Papers

Students will randomly select one of three forms of reaction papers ten times during the semester. The three types of activities include the following: 1) Provide three provocative questions that require fellow students to debate the merits, ethical complexities, or applicability of the readings assigned for that evening. 2) Bring a case reported in any genre of media that is relevant to the readings assigned for that evening. 3) Construct a hypothetical case to provoke enlightened discussion based on the readings assigned for that evening. For each reaction paper, students must give the instructor a 250-500 word explanation of how the material selected to meet the assignment reflects the content of the reading.

Final Manuscript

The final paper should analyze some aspect of a risk by applying an extended review of a specific element of the communication literature to a risk management situation. Students are not limited to the cases covered in class. This paper should take the form of a conference paper or journal article. Papers must include research questions, a rationale, designation of a data set, a review of literature that articulates a methodological stance, an analysis section, and a discussion of implications. The paper may not exceed 6,000 words unless the student can establish that the journal to which the manuscript will be submitted has a larger word limit.

Section Reports

Students will complete four section reports during the semester. Each section report should be between 1000 and 1500 words. The reports comprise an argument that summarizes the students' response to the readings for the relevant section of the course material. The reports should not summarize the material. Rather the reports should develop arguments to support their reactions to the readings. Specifically, the students should provide examples and references to the readings to support their position as to whether or not they agree, disagree, or are indifferent to the general premises established by the authors. Students should be prepared to share their section reports with the class orally.

Policies:

- All assignments are due on time. Any lateness accrues penalties (reduction of a letter grade for every day late). Make up speeches or assignments are scheduled at the instructor's discretion.
- Absences will only be excused in advance, or with proper documentation. Participation is a critical element in any communication course. Moreover, students who choose not to attend the lectures tend to have a more difficult time completing their assignments than do those students who attend regularly. Whenever possible, the instructor should be notified in advance if students must miss class.
- Students are responsible for all missed class material, announcements, and assignments.
- Technology use must be advised by the instructor at least one class period prior to use.
- Students will receive a detailed outline of all assignments at least one week before they are due.
- Students are highly encouraged to interact with the instructor outside of class. A few minutes with the instructor can often eliminate confusion or anxiety concerning an assignment. Students unable to meet with the instructor during office hours are encouraged to make appointments at other times.

Tentative Daily Schedule

SECTION I

Risk as Persuasion:

Technology, Persuasion, and Personal Safety: Conceiving Risk through Communication

Week One—August 30th

Course Overview

Definitions of Risk

Week Two—September 13th

The Reality of Risk in a Tightly Coupled Society

Read: Perrow Chpt. 1, 2, 3

Reaction Paper One is due

Week Three—September 20th

Coupling, Greed, and Persuasion as Elements of Risk

Read: Perrow Chapt. 4, 5, 6

Reaction Paper Two is due

Week Four—September 27th

Coping with High Risk Systems

Read: Perrow, Chpt 7, 8, 9, Postscript, Afterword

Initial proposal for final manuscript is due (1 page)

Reaction Paper Three is due

Week Five—October 4

Perrow Section Reports

SECTION II

Risk as Dialogue:

Rhetoric and the Reification of Risk: Juxtaposing Dialogue and Avarice

Week Six—October 11

Understanding Risk as a Rhetorical Reification: Hazard and Outrage

Read: Saur, Chpt. 1, 2, 3

Reaction Paper four is due

Week Seven—October 18

Developing and Understanding of Counterintuitive Ideas

Proposal for Course Paper Due

Read: Sauer Chpt. 4, 5, 6

Reaction Paper five is due

Week Eight—October 25

Risk Communication and Problem Solving

Read: Sauer Chpt. 7, 8, 9, 10

Reaction Paper six is due

Final Manuscript Data Base and Method Proposals are due (2 pages)

Week Nine—November 1

Sauer Section Report

SECTION II

Communication as a Resource:

Rhetoric and the Reification of Risk: Juxtaposing Dialogue and Avarice

Week Ten—November 8

Living in a State of Mindlessness

Read: Langer, Chpt. 1, 2, 3, 4

Reaction Paper seven is due

Week Eleven—November 15

Converting to a State of Mindfulness

Proposal for Course Paper Due

Read: Langer Chpt. 5, 6, 7

Reaction Paper eight is due

Week Twelve—November 22

Living in a State of Mindfulness

Read: Langer Chpt. 7, 8, 9, 10

Update on Final Manuscript Progress is due (1 page/verifiable)

Reaction Paper nine is due

Week Thirteen—November 29

Langer Section Reports

Week Fourteen—December 6

Terrorism Section Reports

Deadline for first reading of Final Manuscripts by Faculty

Week Fifteen—December 13

Terrorism Section Reports

Peer evaluation of Final Manuscripts

Finals Week—December 20

Presentation of Risk Manuscripts

Final Manuscripts are due

The following readings are recommended, but not required:

Risk Assessment

Covello, V. T., & Mumpower, J. (1985). Risk analysis and risk management: An historical perspective. *Risk Analysis*, 5, 103-120.

Calabrese, E. J., Baldwin, L. A., Holland, C. D. (1999). Hormesis: A highly generalizable and reproducible phenomenon with important implications for risk assessment. *Risk Analysis*, 19, 261-282.

Putzrath, R. M. , & Wilson, J. D. (1999). Fundamentals of health risk assessment: Use, derivation, validity and limitations of safety indices. *Risk Analysis*, 19, 21-248.

Heath, R. L. (1995). Corporate environmental risk communication: Cases and practices along the Texas Gulf Coast. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook*, 18 (pp. 255-277). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Problem-Solving

Rowan, K. E. (1991). Goals, obstacles, and strategies in risk communication: A problem solving approach to improving communication about risks. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 19, 300-329.

Rowan, K. E. (2000). Explaining illness through the mass media: The problem-solving perspective. In B. B. Whaley (Ed.), *Explaining illness: Research, theory, strategies* (pp. 69-100). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Earning Trust

Parrott, R. , & Duggan, A. (1999). Using coaches as role models of sun protection for youth: Georgia's "Got Youth Covered" project. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27, 107-119.

Trost M. R., Lanagan, E. J. , & Kellar-Guenther, Y. (1999). Not everyone listens when you “just say no”: Drug resistance in relational context. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 27, 120-138.

Slovic, P. (1999). Trust, emotion, sex, politics, and science: Surveying the risk assessment. *Risk Analysis*, 19, 689-701.

Communicating Risk Information

Rowan, K. E. (1991). When simple language fails: Presenting difficult science to the public. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, 21, 369-382.

Mac Gregor, D. G., Slovic, P. , & Malmfors, T. (1999). How exposed is exposed enough? Lay inferences about chemical exposure *Risk analysis*, 19, 649-659.

Smith, S. L. (1997). The effective use of fear appeals in persuasive immunization: An analysis of national immunization intervention messages. *Journal of Applied Communication*, 25, 264-292.

Witte, K. (1995). Generating effective risk messages: How scary should your risk communication be? In B.R. Burelson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook*, 18 (pp. 229-254). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.