Communication Studies Program

Department of History and Liberal Studies

COMS 497-01E
Reputation and Crisis Management
Spring 2026

Instructor: Lydia Lum

Office: Ferguson 132B

Office Hours: 3 – 4 pm, Tuesdays, Thursdays, 3 – 5 pm, Wednesdays, and by appointment. I will announce a drop-in Zoom hour, based on student input, in addition to my in-person office hours.

University Email: Put "497" as "subject" of your email – or it will take me longer to answer. I teach 5 classes in Spring 2025. Your CWID number not needed. My email is Lydia.Lum@etamu.edu

Class Meeting Time: Tuesdays/Thursdays, 12:30 pm – 1:45 pm, Ferguson 310 (SS)

"Having knowledge but lacking the power to clearly express it is no better than never having any ideas at all." -- Pericles

Communication Studies B.A./B.S.

The Communication Studies program is designed as an area of study to apply scholarly communication research for a variety of careers and personal goals in an interconnected world.

Two program goals are:

- Each graduate will be communicatively informed in every communication situation they find themselves in, such as understanding others verbally and nonverbally in professional and personal situations.

- Each graduate will effectively communicate verbally and nonverbally in each communication situation they find themselves in, such as professional and personal contexts. Furthermore, an essential part of effective communication is the ability to communicate strategically verbally and nonverbally to accomplish one's goals.

COURSE INFORMATION

Required Textbook and Resources

1. *THINK Public Relations*: Wilcox, Cameron, Reber, & Shin. (Pearson Publishing) – Print or online version. ISBN-13: 978-0-205-85725-8

Assigned reading should be completed before the next class period, unless otherwise specified. This also applies to readings assigned from other materials and resources.

2. We may use free [Smartsheet](#) templates.

3. PR Case Websites, such as, but not limited to PRsay, as well as:

    https://www.prsa.org
    https://www.prweek.com
    https://instituteforpr.org
    https://www.prnewswire.com

4. Social media trends and posts: Instagram, TikTok, Reddit, X (formerly Twitter), and more.

5. You might need a new Blue Book or two, depending on Quiz/Exam need(s).

Required Technology: myLeo D2L Brightspace, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, and PDF.
Each East Texas A&M University course section has a corresponding course shell in the myLeo online Learning Management System (LMS). Below are technical requirements.

LMS Requirements:

https://community.brightspace.com/s/article/Brightspace-Platform-Requirements

LMS Browser Support:

https://documentation.brightspace.com/EN/brightspace/requirements/all/browser_support.htm

YouSeeU Virtual Classroom Requirements:

https://support.youseeu.com/hc/en-us/articles/115007031107-Basic-System-Requirements

Zoom Video Conferencing Tool

https://inside.tamuc.edu/campuslife/CampusServices/CITESupportCenter/Zoom_Account.aspx?source=universal
menu

- Use your campus-wide ID (CWID) and password to log into the course.
- If you do not know your CWID or have forgotten your password, contact the Center for IT Excellence (CITE) at 903.468.6000 or helpdesk@etamu.edu

University Course Catalogue Description

This course shows students how they can portray businesses and people as they want to be perceived by their publics, or audiences. Students can learn how to survive and thrive when turmoil occurs to the reputations of businesses and people. This course has no prerequisite.

Student Learning Outcomes: We will emphasize applied learning as much as possible. At the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify key messages in response to a crisis and communicate them with clarity, consistency, and accuracy to employees and other stakeholders.

2. Analyze crises events.

3. Apply crisis communication theory and communication strategies to develop a crisis management plan that is appropriate for a specific organization.

4. Develop an understanding of the four-step process and how business, government, and not-for-profit organizations use it to alter, adapt to, or maintain their environments to achieve organizational goals and navigate crises.

5. Explore how Artificial Intelligence (AI) can help us brainstorm ideas and shorten research and other processes – without letting it do *all* the work for us.

Student Responsibilities and Tips to Succeed in the Course

- Attend class.
- Check ETAMU email account at least three times a week.
- Check your grades in myLeo DL2 Brightspace.
- Submit assignments through myLeo DL2 Brightspace in Content, Assignments, correct envelopes.
- If you're having difficulties, **contact me**. I enjoy helping students but need *you* to keep me informed.

GRADING AND ASSESSMENTS

Submit assignments electronically through D2L Brightspace no later than **11:59 pm CT**, on the due date unless otherwise specified.
- Label homework assignments with your name, course name, and assignment number. Example: Lydia Lum, COMS 497, Case Study.
- All written assignments must be double-spaced. Triple-space if you're unsure.
- Submit your homework papers in the correct envelope by accessing Course Shell, Content, Assignments, Correct Envelope.

- If you need a homework extension for a take-home exam or quiz or other homework assignment, ask for it. I issue extensions without penalties whenever possible but reserve the right to ask you for a doctor's note, screenshot of a thermometer showing fever, or a funeral announcement.
- Missing work should be completed and submitted within 2 weeks of the original due date, except for the Final Paper due in May and your points-earning work due after April 8. Manage your time. If you encounter problems, please come talk to me.
- If you participate in university-sponsored activities, such as intercollegiate sports, please contact me with appropriate documentation *before* your absence. You're responsible for all missed work.
- Because some students may have 2 or even 3 classes with me in Spring '26, **I may stagger homework due dates** in D2L so that affected students do not have multiple high-stakes assignments due on the same night. This does not apply, however, to reading textbook chapters or other materials in D2L. Instead, assigned reading should occur *before* the class period so that we may discuss the major points and/or use the content for in-class group activities.
- During this semester, I may notify the class that if anyone hasn't submitted *any* homework (or a specific category of homework such as, but not limited to exams and quizzes), by a certain date, then I may deduct at least 10% of the points before grading it.

Grading: The Department of History and Liberal Studies supports university policies of academic excellence as noted in the student handbook.

- Interpretation of grades should be considered within the university framework: A=excellent; B=good; C=average; D=below average; and F=failing.
- Final semester grades in this course will be based on the following scale:

Course Assignments/Assessments

A = 100%-90%

B = 89%-80%

C = 79%-70%

D = 69%-60%

F = 59% or Below

Note: My grading system has a 5% Quality Effort category. I award your score at semester's end. The more homework you submit, the more points you earn – usually. See below.

Assessments

- Assignments 40%
- Crisis Response and Communication Plan (group work) 5%
- In-class activities 25%
- Quizzes 10% -- category may include short, one-time tasks like the "Help Professor Lum help me" questionnaire that can help boost your total Quizzes grade.
- Career Opportunity Analysis Paper 10%
- Attendance 5% -- also see "attendance" under University Policies section
- Quality Effort 5% -- score is awarded at semester's end, so it isn't visible sooner.

Attendance (5%)

I expect you to attend every class period so contact me if you have problems. I may give *fewer* quizzes if your attendance is consistently high and you're engaging with discussions and course content.

Assignments (40%) SLOs 1-5

These will typically consist of homework outside of class, but I reserve the right to consider an "assignment" work that is done entirely, or in part, during the class period so that I, or your peers can help you. This can be homework completed individually, or group work. Assignments may include, but aren't limited to:
- Research and plan PR campaigns for real-world and make-believe clients.
- Create press releases and/or media kits, potentially using different kinds of media. I may give you the raw materials – meaning, the content – to create the release.
- Case studies. I will post a list in D2L of well-known corporate crises, personal scandals, environmental disasters, and food, beverage, and other consumer product problems from which to choose your topic.
- PR event log
- PR event analysis
- Reflections in which you write or audio-record your thoughts about this course and any "wish list." Meaning, you can potentially influence course content.
- Expect minimum 5 assignments in this course beginning in January. More assignments mean more available points, and the less impact each score has on your total grade.

Crisis Response and Communications Plan (5%) SLOs 1, 3, 5

A cornerstone of managing an organization's reputation and responding to crises is establishing and maintaining a communications plan. In small teams, you will create such a plan for an organization that isn't East Texas A&M.

- This high-stakes work will start late January or early February. Expect to earn 100 points maximum -- or more.
- I may allow class period(s) for you to work on these together, which is added incentive to come to class on time. I would consult with you and offer feedback to works-in-progress.
- Expect to use AI tools to potentially trim work time.

In-class activities (25%) SLOs 1-5
These may include, but aren't limited to:
- Work in small teams, such as experiential learning that mimics the work of a PR firm.
- Participation along with discussions of assigned reading.
- Presentation of work completed during and/or outside class periods, along with peer review and critique.
- Guest speakers help us learn about crisis communication and management, careers, and job responsibilities during emergencies, natural disasters, and tragedies.

- An in-class activity may stretch beyond a single class period, but it's unlikely an activity will recur. A guest speaker who visits our class is unlikely to return, so your attendance and participation are key to your earning points.

Quizzes/Exams (10%) SLOs 1-5

These may occur during or outside class periods. This includes potential in-class, pop quizzes. Take-home quizzes are untimed, open-book.

- You may leverage AI tools for any quiz/exam, but be mindful that sometimes they lengthen rather than shorten processes.
- Expect minimum 3 quizzes starting late January or early February, spread across the semester.
- Expect that quizzes (and exams) will cover textbook readings and other course material.

Final Assignment: Career Opportunity Analysis Paper (10%) SLOs 1, 2, 5

Write a first-person, double-spaced paper explaining your plan for personal career development. Your paper should include:

- A SWOT analysis of your situation involving a communications or PR or executive role in *any* industry, whether sciences, IT, food and beverage, transportation.
- An understanding of what PR is, along with crisis communications and reputation management.
- Your career goals.
- A plan to achieve these goals in relation to your PR and non-PR skills, interests, and experience. Your plan should address the rest of your college career. If you expect to graduate in May 2026, explain how well-equipped you believe you are in terms of managing an employer's or client's reputation—especially when a crisis occurs.
- If you took COMS 2330 in Fall 2025, **your instructions may differ** from classmates who did not take COMS 2330 "PR Principles."
- Use only Microsoft Word to write your paper. PDFs and other formats take much longer to grade. Help your cause!
- Label homework with your name, course section, and assignment name. Example: Lydia Lum, COMS 497, Final Paper.
- Follow homework instructions. Proofread before submitting your paper. **Part of your paper's grade** is based on following these instructions along with writing mechanics such as grammar, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.
- Submit your paper electronically by accessing Activities, Assignments, correct envelope.
- I will provide additional instructions in advance of your deadline during Finals Week, May 2 - 8. We will cover plenty of topics this spring semester, so your paper can easily be unique from others. If your paper closely resembles another student's paper, you may receive an "F" for this entire course.

COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

For questions about, or difficulties with course material, email me by putting into "subject" line, "497 class" – or it will take me longer to answer. Some of you are taking more than 1 of my 5 classes in Spring 2025. Your CWID number is not necessary. My email address is Lydia.Lum@etamu.edu

- I check email at least once daily and will reply to yours within 24 hours, weekdays.
- I check email at least once on weekends and if I don't reply then, I will do so on the next weekday, unless it's a university holiday.
- Personal computer and internet connection problems do not excuse the requirement to complete all course work in a timely and satisfactory manner. Plan B can be an ETAMU campus computer lab, a backup PC at home, work, or a friend's home, your local library, local cafes, and FedEx and similar office service businesses.

Technical Support
- If you're having technical difficulty with any part of Brightspace, contact Brightspace Technical Support at 877-325-7778.
- Other support options can be found here: https://community.brightspace.com/support/s/contactsupport

Student Support
- The Academic Success Center focuses on providing resources to help you achieve academic success.
- Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software used by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading Word documents for assignment submission, are required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the ETAMU bookstore to see if they have any student copies.

UNIVERSITY PROCEDURES/POLICIES

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.

- If it's appropriate to say to, or in front Grandma, then it's okay to say it to your classmates and/or to me.
- Consult the Rules of Netiquette for details about how to interact with peers in an online forum: https://www.britannica.com/topic/netiquette

The Code of Student Conduct is detailed in the Student Guidebook. http://www.etamu.edu/Admissions/oneStopShop/undergraduateAdmissions/studentGuidebook.aspx

Academic Integrity
- East Texas A&M University students are expected to maintain high standards of integrity and honesty in all of their scholastic work.
- Do not submit homework for COMS 497 that you have submitted for another course unless you receive instructor's written permission to do so.
- For details and the definition of academic dishonesty, see the following procedures:

Undergraduate Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.03

http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/documents/13.99.99.R0.03UndergraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyForm.pdf

Graduate Student Academic Dishonesty 13.99.99.R0.10

http://www.tamuc.edu/academics/graduateschool/faculty/GraduateStudentAcademicDishonestyFormold.pdf

East Texas A&M University acknowledges there are legitimate uses of **Artificial Intelligence**, ChatBots, or other software that can generate text, or suggest replacements for text beyond individual words, as determined by the course instructor.

- Any use of such software must be documented. Any undocumented use of such software constitutes an instance of academic dishonesty (plagiarism).
- Individual instructors may disallow entirely the use of such software for individual assignments or for the entire course. Students should be aware of such requirements and follow their instructors' guidelines. If no instructions are provided, the student should assume that **the use of such software is disallowed**.
- You are fully responsible for the content of any assignment you submit, regardless of whether you used an AI, in any way. This specifically includes cases in which the AI plagiarized another text or misrepresented sources.

ETAMU Attendance
Punctual attendance is expected for class periods and on weekly assignments and tests.

- Excessive absences are defined by the instructor as missing three class periods or a weekly assignment, excused or unexcused.
- Attendance is measured by remaining in class for the entire period and by submitting appropriate assignments for the week.

Make-Up Assignments and Exams: If you have an unexcused absence on a day you are scheduled to make a presentation or take a test in person, time constraints may force the instructor to not grant make-up presentations or tests.

For more information about the attendance policy, visit the Attendance webpage and Procedure 13.99.99.R0.01.

http://www.tamuc.edu/admissions/registrar/generalInformation/attendance.aspx

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

East Texas A&M University, Velma K. Waters Library, Rm 162, phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835. Fax (903) 468-8148

Email: studentdisabilityservices@etamu.edu

Website: Office of Student Disability Resources and Services
http://www.tamuc.edu/campusLife/campusServices/studentDisabilityResourcesAndServices/

Nondiscrimination Notice

East Texas A&M University will comply in the classroom, and in online courses, with all federal and state laws prohibiting discrimination and related retaliation on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, genetic information or veteran status. Further, an environment free from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression will be maintained.

Campus Concealed Carry Statement

Texas Senate Bill -11 (Government Code 411.2031, etal.) authorizes the carrying of a concealed handgun in East Texas A&M University buildings only by persons who have been issued and are in possession of a Texas License to Carry a Handgun. Qualified law enforcement officers or those who are otherwise authorized to carry a concealed handgun in the State of Texas are also permitted to do so.

- Pursuant to Penal Code (PC) 46.035 and East Texas A&M Rule 34.0602R1, license holders may not carry a concealed handgun in restricted locations.
- For a list of locations, refer to the Carrying Concealed Handguns On Campus document and/or consult your event organizer.
- Web URL: http://www.tamuc.edu/aboutUs/policiesProceduresStandardsStatements/rulesProcedures/34SafetyOfEmployeesAndStudents/34.06.02.R1.pdf
- Pursuant to PC 46.035, the open carrying of handguns is prohibited on all East Texas A&M campuses.
- Report violations to the University Police Department at 903-886-5868 or 9-1-1.

East Texas A&M Supports Students' Mental Health

The Counseling Center at East Texas A&M, located in the Halladay Building, Room 203, offers counseling services, educational programming, and connection to community resources for students.

- Students have 24/7 access to the Counseling Center's crisis assessment services by calling 903-886-5145.
- For more information regarding Counseling Center events and confidential services, visit http://www.etamu.edu/counsel

This course syllabus is subject to change.

Details of assignments, course readings, in-class activities, plus homework due dates in D2L.