



Risk Communication

SPEA E412 (14479) / E512 (14480)

Instructor: Diane Henshel dhenshel@indiana.edu

Class Meeting: Tuesday / Thursday 4:45 – 6:00 p.m.
Class Location: O'Neill PV 163

Zoom available only for when you are sick. Please contact me to be sent the day's zoom link.

Office Hours: Tuesday in SPEA 443: 1-2:30 pm
and by appointment (in-person, phone, or video-conference)

Course Description:

In this risk communication course, students learn how to convey technical information to any audience. In this class, we will address communicating with multiple audiences including the public, legislators, public officials, and working with the media. Risk communication is needed any time a hazard exists or a potentially hazardous situation occurs and people must be informed or decisions must be made. For example, these situations occur in industrial settings, between industrial plants and their neighbors, and between government agencies and citizens potentially affected by hazards (natural and man-made). The methods you will learn and practice in this class, however, are applicable to any situation in which you must communicate technical information to an audience, whether it be an audience of one or an audience of hundreds.

We will examine the process of risk communication, when it might be needed, communication planning, and how to carry out a risk communication program. The class includes presentation of information, exercises, role-playing, and class discussion.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester students should be able to:

- Know the difference between hazard and risk.
- Understand the factors that affect risk perception and trust.
- Understand, recognize and create different types of risk communication campaigns (for care, consensus, and crisis communication).
- Identify and effectively employ risk communication techniques relevant to the situation.
- Effectively describe complex and / or foreign concepts to unfamiliar audiences via visual, verbal, and written communication.
- Recognize and be able to appropriately communicate with audiences who have diverse perspectives.
- Understand and effectively apply the usefulness (and not usefulness) of ChatGPT and other artificial intelligence tools within a communication context.

Required Material:

Textbook: Risk Communication: A Handbook for Communicating Environmental, Safety, and Health Risks (6th Edition). Authors: Regina E. Lundgren & Andrea H. McMakin
ISBN-13: 978-1-119-45611-7

Link to access free IU Library ebook:

<https://proxyiub.uits.iu.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&AN=1841773>

See Canvas Files for access to e-versions of previous editions.

<https://www.amazon.com/Risk-Communication-Handbook-Communicating-Environmental/dp/1119456118>

Readings:

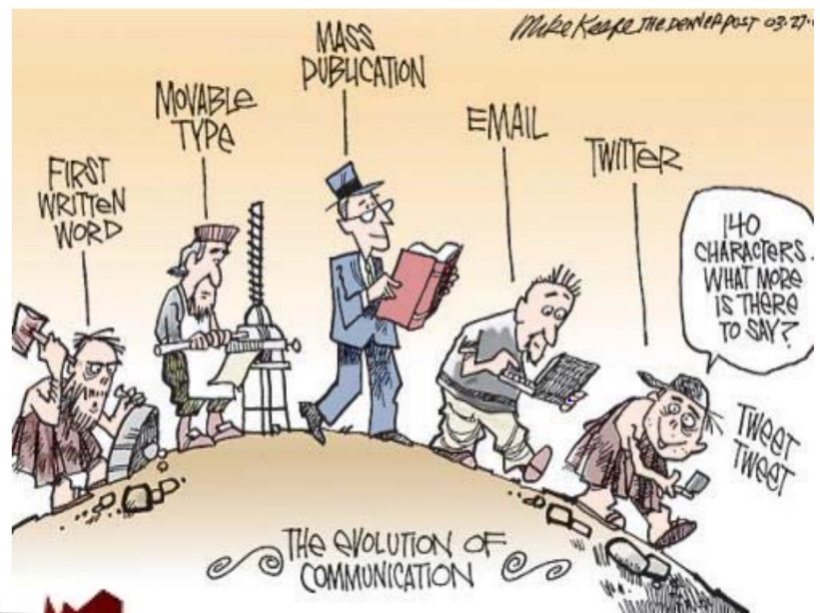
Non-textbook readings will be available on Canvas Files.

Refer to the Course Schedule and Canvas Modules for the folder location of the readings.

Digital Tools:

Google Drive will be used through the class for some class discussion and think-pair-share.

Microsoft Teams will be encouraged for role play development and writing collaboration so that I can track scenario development and provide guidance when needed.



Course Content:

Assignment Schedule: The assignment schedule can be found on the course calendar (and under Schedule) on Canvas. The schedule is subject to limited change in the event of extenuating circumstances. The schedule may change to accommodate current events/breaking news that is relevant to the course topics.

It is up to the student to track when assignments are due. Canvas assignments are organized by the following subtopics which vaguely follow course development and timeline:

- **Assignments for class participation.** These assignments are invariably due during the first half of the semester. These are generally graded full points/half points/no points.
- **Assignments related to writing the role play scenarios.** These assignments are interspersed with the class participation assignments and are all going to contribute to the final role play scenario. These assignments are graded based on whether you meet the written requirements of the assignments, but grading is still pretty lenient.
- **Assignments related to evaluation of the role play scenarios.** These assignments are intended to help you write better and write professionally. The format is a formal brief, a standard format used throughout government and industry. The rubric is detailed and the grading matches the grading rubric exactly. If something is called for in the rubric and it is missing, you do not get those points. At least one, likely two or more of these will be heavily edited to help you write better.
- **Final submission of role play scenarios and the risk communication critiques that are used as reflective thinking pieces instead of a final.** These assignments are graded more strictly than the class participation and initial role play scenario writing assignments, but not as strictly as the evaluations that are your formal writing exercises. Grammar, organization, and content all affect the grade.

NOTE that there is some time overlap for when these parts of the class are being covered.

I will be grading assignments after the due date. If you get in assignments late, it is up to you to notify me to go back and grade your submission.

E412 Point Distribution:

Assignment	Percent Distribution	Notes
Class Participation	10%	See Canvas and Schedule for details
Weekly Readings / Assignments	10%	
Risk Role Play Scenario	30%	Group project
Development	20%	See below and Canvas for details.
Final Product	10%	
Risk Role Play Participation	10%	
Risk Role Play Scenario Evaluations	20%	4 evaluations at 5% each
Risk Communication Critique	20%	See Canvas for details

E512 Point Distribution:

Assignment	Percent Distribution	Notes
Class Participation	10%	See Canvas and Schedule for details
Weekly Readings / Assignments	10%	
Risk Role Play Scenario	30%	Group project
<i>Development</i>	20%	See below and Canvas for details.
<i>Final Product</i>	10%	
Risk Role Play Participation	10%	
Risk Role Play Scenario Evaluations	20%	4 evaluations at 5% each
Risk Communication Critique	10%	See Canvas for details
Risk Communication Comparison	10%	See Canvas for details

Below are brief explanations of the major assignments. Additional documentation and guidance will be provided for each assignment.

Weekly Readings / Assignments: Weekly readings and assignments are detailed in the course calendar. These include short responses readings and in-class prompts. Additional details can be found on Canvas and will be provided in class.

Risk Role Play Scenario: This is a semester-long group project. You and your teammates will develop a scenario where risk communicators (e.g. managers / mediators / technical experts) must effectively convey information to stakeholders (e.g. decision-makers / community members / constituents). This scenario will then be role played by your fellow classmates that are not a part of your group. Additional details can be found on Canvas and will be provided in class.

Risk Role Play Participation: You will participate in at least one role play as a risk/technical communicator, and at least one role play as a minor character. Additional details can be found on Canvas and will be provided in class.

Risk Role Play Scenario Evaluations (in lieu of in-class midterms): The evaluations are your opportunity to summarize and provided constructive criticism of the risk communication techniques used in the risk role play scenarios. Additional details can be found on Canvas and will be provided in class.

Risk Communication Critique (in lieu of in-class final): Risk communication is happening all around you. Select a current risk communication event and using what you've learned in the class, constructive critique the event's risk communication campaign. Additional details can be found on Canvas and will be provided in class.

Risk Communication Comparison (required for graduate students): Throughout the semester you will have opportunities to observe risk/science/technical communication processes in the real world. Watch two such events with different types of risk communicators in the lead. Write a short (1- 2 pages single spaced) formal comparison of the communication styles used by the two risk communicators. Additional details can be found on Canvas and will be provided in class.

Places to find relevant Risk Communication talks online:

- During the semester, one place to find departmental and IUB level presentations is on the

IU Events Calendar: <https://events.iu.edu/bloomington/>

Other potential locations for talks include:

- TED Talks: <https://www.ted.com/talks> (TED speakers are worked with, these tend to be focused and practiced)
- World Economic Forum events: <https://www.weforum.org/events>
- IU Environmental Resilience Institute – Environmental Resilience-related events and speakers: <https://eri.iu.edu/news-and-events/events/index.html>
- Or any other recorded talk given that addresses environmental or health risks in some way.

(There is a lot more online now as many meetings transferred to online during COVID, and many of the talks at such meetings are publicly available. Look for government agency seminars, for example, or for presentations offered by professional societies.)

Course Grading Scale:

98 – 100 = A+	94 – 96.9 = A	90 – 93.9 = A-
88 – 89.9 = B+	83 – 86.9 = B	80 – 82.9 = B-
78 – 79.9 = C+	73 – 76.9 = C	70 – 72.9 = C-
68 – 69.9 = D+	63 – 66.9 = D	60 – 62.9 = D-

NOTE: This grading scale does not match the Canvas grading scale.

In addition, I do not use Canvas for grade calculation, only for submitting and tracking assignments. Canvas does NOT calculate grades correctly.

Attendance and Absences:

This is a class during which you learn by doing and discussing. Missing class means you miss a portion of the learning that can't be made up by simply reading.

A portion of your course grade is determined by your class attendance and participation in class discussions. Attendance is taken every day. Each student can miss up to three days of class without any grade deductions; thereafter, a third (1/3) of a letter grade will be deducted (e.g., A drops to A-) from your final grade for each day missed without alternative arrangements made ahead of time.

Absences are generally not excused for job interviews, funerals, car trouble, etc. **You are, however, requested to stay home and Zoom in to class rather than come in physically to class if you feel sick.** You can participate through online IF I know ahead of time and can set up the Zoom for you. (I have class right before this class. **I do not check email after 2 pm on class days.**) The provided three free days are sufficient for most students to tend to other issues as they arise. If you anticipate missing more than two days due to a chronic condition or other extended illness, hardship, or conflict, please contact me in advance to discuss arrangements.

Participation:

Students can earn up to 0.4 points on each day of instruction. 28 days of instruction means you can earn up to 11.2 points from participation, giving up to 1.2 pts extra credit. During some classes, students will complete graded group or individual activities that draw upon the day's lesson and assigned reading. However, if no graded activity is assigned for the day, the points

will be awarded to students based on participation in class.

Participation means being engaged in the classroom by asking questions, answering questions, and contributing original commentary to discussions, think-pair-share, and coedited class work. (Google Docs tracks who writes.) Contributing meaningful and original commentary helps both you and your classmates become better communicators and listeners.

Technology Use:

Do not use your cell phone in class, whether you are attending online or in person. It is distracting to you, your fellow students, and instructor. Laptops are permitted in the classroom, but **social media is not permitted**. Computers are a tool that can become a hindrance and a distraction. [Studies](#) have also shown that handwritten notes foster a deeper understanding of the material.

Using cell phones or social media in class will automatically cause you to lose your participation points for that day. Continuing use of social media in class will result in loss of your in-class computer privileges.

Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools (ChatGPT etc):

ChatGPT is useful as a tool, but has limitations. We will use ChatGPT as a part of working on assignments so you get to understand where it is (or can be) useful, and where it really needs supplementation or just being ignored. As some companies and agencies are also exploring the usefulness of AI tools, this understanding will help you in the future.

The EXPECTATIONS for ALL USES OF AI TOOLS are:

- All use of AI tools must be acknowledged in writing in the assignment.
- Include the following in an attachment to the assignment:
 - The original prompt
 - The AI tool output
 - Your modifications
 - An annotation to the output OR your modifications indicating why the modifications were necessary
- I will be using AI tools to check use of ChatGPT, etc, but honestly, just relying on ChatGPT or Bard or other AI writing / researching tools without critical assessment and revision will result in a pitiful assignment which will earn you a low grade anyway.

Tests and Final:

There are no tests nor is there a final in the course. Writing and communication assignments throughout the course will be used to evaluate your understanding of course objectives and material.

You are expected to improve in all skills throughout the course, including writing and oral communication. Grading will reflect the raw grades and can take improvement into account.

Late Work Policy:

Readings and assignments are expected to be completed prior to coming class. However, it is preferable for you to come to class on time rather than trying to complete an assignment.

Academic Integrity:

You are responsible for completing your own work, be it an individual assignment or within a group project.

Cheating, plagiarism, or any other form of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please refer to the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct for more detail:

<http://www.iu.edu/~code/>, as well as the SPEA Student Honor Code:

https://spea.indiana.edu/doc/undergraduate/ugrd_student_honorcode.pdf

If cheating is indicated from the work handed in, the students involved will be given a 0 for the exam or homework. Additionally, if duplicate answers on tests are found, both the copyer and the copyee will be considered guilty and both will flunk that test. **Even if the cheater knows of other persons who cheated but who were not caught, I reserve the right to prosecute the person(s) I catch cheating.** Repeat offenders will automatically flunk the course.

NOTE: This class policy is lenient compared to the official policy stated in the IU *Code of Student Ethics* (<http://www.iu.edu/~code/>) and the SPEA Honor Code (https://spea.indiana.edu/doc/undergraduate/ugrd_student_honorcode.pdf).

Plagiarism (*to steal and pass off [the ideas or words of another] as one's own without crediting the source: present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source [Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary]*) is against the *Code of Student Ethics, Indiana University* [August 15, 1990]. Anyone who plagiarizes to any extent will fail that assignment, and potentially the class. This includes “borrowing” information from the internet, which can, and will be double checked.



Credit: Michael Mittag / Cool Risk

O'Neill School expectations of civility and professional conduct¹

The O'Neill School takes matters of honesty and integrity seriously because O'Neill is the training ground for future leaders in government, civic organizations, health organizations, and other institutions charged with providing resources for the public, and for members of society who are vulnerable and who are lacking in power and status. Precisely because O'Neill graduates tend to rise to positions of power and responsibility, it is critical that the lessons of honesty and integrity are learned early.

O'Neill requires that all members of its community – students, faculty, and staff – treat others with an attitude of mutual respect both in the classroom and during all academic and nonacademic activities outside the classroom. A student is expected to show respect through behavior that promotes conditions in which all students can learn without interruption or distraction. These behaviors foster an appropriate atmosphere inside and outside the classroom:

- Students are expected to attend class regularly and to be prepared for class.
- Students must be punctual in their arrival to class and be present and attentive for the duration of the class. Eating, sleeping, reading the newspaper, doing work for another class, wandering in and out of the classroom, and packing up or leaving class early are not civil or professional behaviors.
- Students must abide by the course policy regarding use of electronic devices in the classroom.
- Students must responsibly participate in class activities and during team meetings.
- Students must address faculty members, other students, and others appropriately and with respect, whether in person, in writing, or in electronic communications.
- Students must show tolerance and respect for diverse nationalities, religions, races, sexual orientations, and physical abilities.
- Students must not destroy or deface classroom property nor leave litter in the classroom.

Students are expected to have read the assignments and gone through the prepared materials and textbook readings for that day and answered (and turned in) your reading responses in Canvas PRIOR TO COMING TO CLASS. Such class preparation will greatly enhance your ability to learn and understand the material we will cover in the class. Students are expected to review material after class, and ask me about any questions or uncertainties you have about the reading material and the material covered in class. Questions can be posed by email or using any available means of communication, but it is up to you, as the student, to let us know what is confusing or what you are uncertain about. I cannot guess when you are confused about the information you are expected to learn.

Note Selling: Several commercial services have approached students regarding selling class notes/study guides to their classmates. Selling the instructor's notes/study guides in this course is not permitted. Violations of this policy will be reported to the Dean of Students as academic misconduct (violation of course rules). Sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment for which the notes/study guides are being sold, a reduction in your final course grade, or a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities. Additionally, you should know that selling a

faculty member's notes/study guides individually or on behalf of one of these services using IU email, or via Canvas may also constitute a violation of IU information technology and IU intellectual property policies; additional consequences may result.

Materials: The faculty member teaching this course holds the exclusive right to distribute, modify, post, and reproduce course materials, including all written materials, study guides, lectures, assignments, exercises, and exams. While you are permitted to take notes on the online materials and lectures posted for this course for your personal use, you are not permitted to re-post in another forum, distribute, or reproduce content from this course without the express written permission of the faculty member. Any violation of this course rule will be reported to the appropriate university offices and officials, including to the Dean of Students as academic misconduct.

Incompletes: The grade of Incomplete used on the final grade reports indicates that the work is satisfactory as of the end of the semester but has not been completed. The grade of Incomplete may be given only when the completed portion of a student's work in the course is of passing quality. Instructors may award the grade of Incomplete upon a showing of such hardship to a student as would render it unjust to hold the student to the time limits previously fixed for the completion of his/her work. <http://policies.iu.edu/policies/categories/academic-faculty-students/academic-student-affairs/incompletes.shtml>

Late Withdrawal: **NOTE: The auto-W deadline is NO LONGER THE LAST DAY OF CLASS (as it was during and post-Covid). After the auto-W deadline, withdrawal will be significantly limited and you will need permission to withdraw and must meet requirements established by O'Neill. Check the IUB Registrar calendar for specific withdrawal dates: <https://calendars.registrar.indiana.edu/official-calendar/>.**

Withdrawal after the automatic withdrawal period requires approval by the instructor and relevant Program Director, and must be based on dire circumstances relating to extended illness or equivalent distress (IU Enrollment and Student Academic Information Bulletin). Requests to drop due to a failing grade will not be approved. You must be passing the course at the time of withdrawal. Contact your advisor or the appropriate Program Director if you want to petition for late withdrawal.

Additional information for students:

Counseling and Psychological Services

For information about services offered to students by CAPS:
<http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/index.shtml>

TimelyCare

Indiana students have free, 24/7 access to virtual mental health care services with TimelyCare. Students do not need insurance to access TimelyCare services. <https://www.iu.edu/mental-health/find-resources/timely-care.html#0>

Religious Observation

In accordance with the Office of the Dean of Faculties, any student who wishes to receive an excused absence from class must submit a request form available from the Dean of Faculties for each day to be absent. This form must be presented to the course instructor by the end of the second week of this semester. A separate form must be submitted for each day. The instructor will fill in the bottom section of the form and then return the original to the student. Information about the policy on religious observation can be found at the following

website: <https://policies.iu.edu/policies/aca-59-accommodation-religious-observances/index.html>

Accessible Educational Services (formerly Disability Services for Students)

Securing accommodations for a student with disabilities is a responsibility shared by the student, the instructor, and the AES Office. For information about support services or accommodations available to students with disabilities, and for the procedures to be followed by students and instructors: <https://studentlife.indiana.edu/student-support/iub-aes/index.html>

Sexual Harassment

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Title IX and our own Sexual Misconduct policy prohibit sexual misconduct. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help.

If you are seeking help and would like to talk to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with:

- i. The Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at 812-855-8900
- ii. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 812-855-5711
- iii. Confidential Victim Advocates (CVA) at 812-856-2469
- iv. IU Health Center at 812-855-4011

For more information about available resources: <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html>. It is also important to know that federal regulations and University policy require me to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our campus' Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, they will work with a small number of others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. Protecting a student's privacy is of utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html> to learn more.

Commitment to Diversity: Find your home and community at IU

Asian Culture Center

Address: 807 East Tenth Street, Bloomington, IN 47408
Phone: 812-856-5361
Email: acc@indiana.edu
Website: <https://asianresource.indiana.edu/index.html>

First Nations Educational & Cultural Center

Address: 712 E 8th St., Bloomington, IN 47408
Phone: 812-855-4814
Email: fnecc@indiana.edu
Website: <https://firstnations.indiana.edu/contact/index.html>

Jewish Culture Center

Address: 730 E 3rd St., Bloomington, Indiana 47401
Phone: 812-336-3824
Website: <https://iuhillel.org/iu-jewish-culture-center>

LGBTQ+ Culture Center

Address: 705 E 7th St., Bloomington, Indiana 47408
Phone: 812-855-4252
Email: glbtserv@indiana.edu
Website: <https://lgbtq.indiana.edu/contact/index.html>

La Casa Latino Culture Center

Address: 715 E 7th St., Bloomington IN, 47408

Phone: 812-855-0174

Email: lacasa@indiana.edu

Website: <https://lacasa.indiana.edu/>

Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center

Address: 275 N Jordan Ave Bloomington, Indiana 47405

Phone: 812-855-9271

Email: nmgrad@indiana.edu

Website: <https://blackculture.indiana.edu/index.html>

The schedule is in a separate file in Canvas > Files.

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