

Special Topics: Crisis Leadership

MLSX 5380

Patricia D. Witherspoon, Ph.D.

**Dean Emerita & Professor Emerita of Communication
and Lecturer in Leadership Studies**

Office Hours: Mon., Wed., Thurs., Sunday, 8-10 p.m. (MDT/MST)

**Should you need to visit with me at other times, we can schedule a
time convenient for you. (withersp@utep.edu)**

I use Course Announcements and/or E-Mail every week (via Blackboard) for assignment reminders and other information about the course. You also can reach me directly via email at withersp@utep.edu .

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course focuses on leadership in crises. There are different types of crises and all of them move through stages. As a result, effective crisis leadership depends on a variety of leadership behaviors, styles and processes, including decision-making and communication.

COURSE OUTCOMES

Students completing all assignments in this course will be able to demonstrate several learning outcomes, including but not limited to, the abilities to:

- Describe the difference between crisis management and crisis leadership;
- Describe at least 3 crisis leadership competencies;
- Name and define three stages in a crisis event;
- Describe at least 3 leadership styles important to the enactment of crisis leadership;
- Discuss 4 components/best practices for leadership communication during crises;
- Discuss the concepts of “human impacts of crisis” and “human components of crisis;”
- Identify and provide examples of 5 types of risk potentially affecting organizations;
- Define NIMS and ICS and their roles in large-scale crises;
- Describe at least one process used in acquiring information and making decisions in crises;
- Discuss an example of after-incident analysis.

COURSE TOPICS

WEEK 1: The Notions of Crisis Leadership and Crisis Management

WEEK 2: Effective Crisis Leadership and Its Successful Styles

WEEK 3: The Human Impact, and the Human Components, of Crisis

WEEK 4: Risk Management and Crisis Preparation

WEEK 5: Decision-making in Crises

WEEK 6: Crisis Response

WEEK 7: Effective Crisis Communication

WEEK 8: Crisis Recovery/Learning from Crises

READING ASSIGNMENTS, BY WEEK

Text: Fox, Jeffrey C. (2024) The Ultimate Guide to Excellent Crisis Leadership. Bloomington, IN: Xlibris Publishing.

WEEK BEGINNING:

Aug. 25—Fox, Chaps. 1 and 2

Sept. 1—Fox, Chaps. 3 and 4

Sept. 8—Fox, Chaps 6 and 7

Sept. 15—Fox, Chapt. 8

Sept. 22—Fox Chaps. 11 and 12

Sept. 29—Fox, Chapt. 9

Oct. 6—Fox, Chapt. 5

Oct. 13—Fox, Chaps. 10 and 13

OTHER ASSIGNMENTS:

Mini-lectures: as seen and scheduled in the Weekly Modules and Course Calendar

Videos: as seen and scheduled in the Weekly Modules and Course Calendar

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

There will be five assignments in this course, each worth 20% of the final grade.

DISCUSSION POSTS (TOTALING 20% OF THE FINAL GRADE)

In weeks 2-6, I will post a question for student response. The questions are designed to facilitate interaction, shared interests, and perhaps networking that may be beneficial to you beyond the course. **Posts should be the equivalent of at least one typed, double-spaced page, and credit each week also depends on your responding to at least one other student post (no required length).** The questions are provided in the Discussion Board section of the course and in each Weekly Module. The due dates are provided on the course schedule. They are: 9/7; 9/14; 9/21; 9/28; and 10/5.

FIRST WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT, 20% OF FINAL GRADE—DESCRIPTION OF CRISIS STAGES

DUE SEPT. 7

As is discussed in Week 1, crises move through several stages. In your first assignment, **select an example of a crisis you have seen directly or viewed through media reports.** (Examples include a hurricane, major fire, business crisis for a corporation, community health crisis, reputational crisis for a corporation, restaurant chain, etc.)

First, review Chapter 2 in the text which provides several examples of crisis stages. (Additionally, the first mini-lecture focuses on crisis stages.)

Second, discuss the stages that emerged in the crisis you have chosen to analyze.

Third, describe how the leader, or crisis team, responded in each stage.

Finally, discuss if the crisis was solved and the situation for the organization or community (or society) improved. Do some of the problems still continue? Give examples from observations, news reports, etc. to support your assessment.

Add material from the text and/or other course materials. Your paper should be at least 4 pages long, typed double-spaced.

SECOND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT, 20% OF FINAL GRADE—

ANALYSIS OF HUMAN IMPACT/HUMAN ELEMENTS OF CRISES: THE CASE OF COVID

DUE SEPT. 21

Chapters 6 in our text talks about the human impact of disasters, including injury, fear, financial losses, loss of family, etc. Chapter 7 focuses on the human elements used to address crises, including leadership styles, rules and policies, technologies and technological abilities, and financial resources.

The COVID epidemic that hit the world beginning in 2020, created multiple crises-- in families, communities, schools, workplaces, nations, etc.

The Second Written Assignment will be an analysis of human impacts and human elements related to a particular COVID crisis you choose to write about. For instance, you may write about the COVID crisis as faced by your place or work, or your school, or your family, or a city in which you lived.

First, select a COVID crisis to focus on—New York city, your high school or university, a football team (COVID affected sports too), your place of work, your multi-generational family, etc.

Second, using Chapt. 6, describe the human impacts of the COVID crisis on which you are focusing, e.g. loss of a job, inability to do schoolwork because of no Internet, loss of income, etc.

Third, using Chapt. 7, describe the human elements that addressed the COVID crisis you are focusing on. These might include school/organizational policies, leadership capabilities of the crisis leader, financial resources, etc.

In other words, tell a story about the COVID crisis you experienced or followed in the media, emphasizing human impacts and human elements used to combat the crisis.

Your paper should be at least 4 pages in length, typed double-spaced.

THIRD WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT, 20% OF FINAL GRADE--DESCRIPTION OF AN EFFECTIVE CRISIS LEADER DUE OCT. 5

The third paper or written assignment will be a description of a person you regard as an effective crisis leader. **This description should be at least 4 pages in length, typed double-spaced.**

First, review pages 70-76 in our text; they focus on effective crisis leadership competencies/skills.

Second, write a biographical sketch of the crisis leader you have selected for this analysis. This section should include education, hobbies/interests, place of birth or childhood, or any information that would shed light on the individual's leadership development.

Third, describe the crisis situation(s) in which you observed the leader.

Finally, discuss why you chose him/her, using information from Chapter 3, especially pp. 70-76, and any videos/mini-lectures in the course to support your observations.

FOURTH WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT, 20% OF FINAL GRADE—DESCRIPTION OF MODIFIED CRISIS COMMUNICATION PLAN DUE OCT. 19

The fourth and final assignment is an opportunity for you to create a modified crisis communication plan, an important leadership process for crisis leaders. It should be at least 5 pages in length. (Such a plan is generally much longer than 5 pages, so this assignment is a modification of such a plan.)

First, review crisis leadership communication course materials for this week (especially Chapter 5 in the text, and the mini-lecture).

Second, describe the organization for which you are developing the plan. (Describe organization's purpose, structure, size, etc.)

Third, describe major potential sources of crises faced by the organization.

Fourth, identify any audiences you will need to inform about any crisis event. (employees, customers, clients, members of the public, etc.)

Fifth, describe the types of media you will use in the plan (e.g. tv, Facebook/social media, memos, email, X, etc.) and why these are the channels you should use.

LEARNING SYSTEM: BLACKBOARD ULTRA

YOU'LL NEED A COMPUTER WITH BASIC AUDIO/VIDEO OUTPUT EQUIPMENT, A STRONG INTERNET CONNECTION, AND MICROSOFT OFFICE OR SIMILAR SOFTWARE.

FOR HELP WITH BLACKBOARD, GO TO:

<http://help.blackboard.com/student/index.htm>

YOU MAY ALSO CALL THE UTEP HELP DESK WITH PROBLEMS OR QUESTIONS:

915/747-5257. I CHECK INTO BLACKBOARD, AND I CHECK MY EMAIL,

WITHERSP@UTEP.EDU SEVERAL TIMES A DAY. I USE BLACKBOARD TO GIVE YOU FEEDBACK ON ASSIGNMENTS AND ON YOUR POSTS ON OUR DISCUSSION BOARDS. ALWAYS FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME WITH CONCERNS, QUESTIONS, IDEAS, AND OPINIONS. I ALSO SEND ASSIGNMENT REMINDERS ON BLACKBOARD.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Academic dishonesty is prohibited and is considered a violation of rules articulated in UTEP's Handbook of Operating Procedures. It is also contrary to the process of organizational leadership itself, and includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Plagiarism includes using AI-generated material as one's own work.

Any act of academic dishonesty attempted by a UTEP student will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for possible disciplinary action. More information can be found in the UTEP *Handbook of Operating Procedures*, under the heading "[Alleged Student Scholastic Dishonesty](#)" and the UT System [Regents' Rules and Regulations](#).

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT AS APPLICABLE TO THIS CLASS

This law requires that all materials needed for a course be made available to all students in that course, whether it is a face-to-face class or an online course. Please contact me at the beginning of the semester if you need accommodations; I am happy to work with the office on campus that provides accommodations to students with disabilities. That office is the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at (915)747-5148, or you can contact staff via email at CASS@utep.edu. The office is located in UTEP Union East, Room 106.

For additional information, please visit the CASS website at www.sa.utep.edu/cass.

LIBRARY INFORMATION

Access the UTEP Library by visiting <http://libraryweb.utep.edu/>

For individual assistance in the UTEP Library, you may wish to contact Tessy Torres, a specialist for sources in Leadership Studies and Community Engagement. Her email is: mttorres3@utep.edu I have talked with her and she is happy to help students in our class.

Grading Scale: A = 90-100

B = 80-89

C = 70-79

D = 60-69

F = 0-59

