ENR 7400 Communicating Environmental Risk

Spring 2014
Kottman Hall 382, Wednesday 11:10 -12:55

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Office hours by appointment only

Course Description: Introduction to the design and implementation of public-focused risk communication as it relates to environmental, agricultural and public health contexts.

Prerequisites: Graduate standing or permission of instructor

Course Objectives:
This course is designed to help students...

1. Understand the psychological and socio-cultural factors that influence the success of risk communication messaging.
2. Know how to design, implement, and evaluate a successful, public-focused risk communication effort.

Course Format: Class time will largely be based on discussion and small group activities. An interactive approach such as this makes your attendance and participation a crucial component of achieving success in this course.

Assignments and Exams:

1. Risk Assessment Paper –8-10 pages, double-spaced, where you assess the calculated and perceived risk associated with a specific hazard. You should pick a risk that is of interest to you – health hazards for health communication, environmental hazards for environmental communication. Use any available outside research/resources about your hazard, and be sure to include at least 10 outside references. Specifically, your paper should examine the following aspects:
   1. What is the numerical quantification of the risk? How does this compare to other similar or perhaps more familiar risks?
      a. What negative consequences occur as a result of exposure to the hazard? What is the likelihood of those negative consequences?
      b. What does the expert model of the risk look like? How does exposure occur? How does infection or other consequences occur? What are the most relevant risk factors?
   2. Who are the stakeholders involved (e.g., affected individuals, interested parties)? Whose perception is most critical to the adoption of protective behavior? What is their perception of the risk?
      a. What does the typical public mental model of the risk look like? Why do people perceive the risk this way?
   3. Do expert assessments and lay perceptions about the hazard differ? Compare
and contrast the expert and public mental model of the hazard.

4. Identify at least 3 key recommendations for improving the content of future risk communication? What key beliefs need to be changed? How might one increase the alignment between expert assessments and public perceptions?

2. Risk Communication Paper – 8-10 pages, double-spaced, where you take the hazard you identified in the first paper, and the critical content needed for future risk communication, and develop a risk communication campaign. Be sure to address not just what you would say and do, but how you would present information and engage your audience. Address how your approach addresses relevant psychological processes and incorporates relevant motivations discussed in class. While the project is theoretical, your proposal for the campaign should be realistic and implementable. In other words, if you want to run television advertisements about your hazard, you should be able to supply me with a storyboard for the advertising campaign. If you want to use brochures, you will need to turn in sample brochure ideas. You will need to use at least 10 applications/references from the course, additional outside references and resources are encouraged. Specifically, your paper should examine the following aspects:

1. Briefly recap relevant information from paper 1 - how does expert versus public perception differ? Who is the target audience of the effort? What are the critical beliefs and other considerations that you will incorporate?
2. What are your risk communication objectives and goals?
3. What is your approach or method? How will you carry out your effort? Why is this appropriate based on knowledge gained from the class?
4. Are there ethical issues or other potential constraints that need to be addressed? If so, how are you addressing them?
5. What is your message? Provide an example to be used in the campaign. How are you framing the information? Why? How are you presenting any relevant data? Why? How does this message incorporate relevant psychological processes and motivations?
6. Why do you expect your approach and specific messaging to be successful? How will you evaluate your effort?

3. Case Study Applications – With a partner you will present a case study application at the end of the semester in about 50 minutes of class time. You will work together to identify a hazard for which there have been multiple past or ongoing risk communication efforts. You will provide readings for the class (if necessary to provide advance background), and present a summary of the past and ongoing efforts (what was the effort? how were messages presented? etc.). Finally, you will lead a class critique of the strengths and weaknesses of the effort given the knowledge you gained in this course. Be sure to address how you would improve the effort going forward. Do not rely solely on lecture; find ways to incorporate the class in the critique through discussion or other activities.

4. Attendance and Participation – Each day you need to bring a sheet of paper with an application or insight you gained from the readings, as well as any questions you want to address in class. If you cannot attend class but want to submit your application/questions electronically in advance, you can receive partial credit for that day (half of the daily points).
Grading:

- Risk Assessment Paper 30%
- Risk Communication Paper 35%
- Case Study Application 20%
- Attendance and Participation 15%

TOTAL 100%

The course syllabus, schedule, and assigned readings are subject to change. The syllabus can be made available in alternative formats upon request; students with disabilities are responsible for making their needs known to the instructor and for seeking available assistance in a timely manner.

Class Readings:

There is one required course textbook:


The text is available from most online retailers and the PDFs of each chapter in the book can be downloaded from the OSU libraries through the Wiley Online Library. Other required readings in the form of journal articles are listed below; and will be available through CARMEN.

Make-up and Late Assignments: In-class assignments or points cannot be made up. Late papers will be accepted, but will be docked 5 points for each day that they are late.

Academic Misconduct: It is expected that all students have read and understand the University’s Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University’s Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute “Academic Misconduct.” The Ohio State University’s Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: “Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process.”

Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University’s Code of Student Conduct is never considered an “excuse” for academic misconduct.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that you have violated the University’s Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, please contact me.

Other sources of information on academic misconduct (integrity) to which you can refer include:
- The Committee on Academic Misconduct web pages (http://oaa.osu.edu/coam.html)
- Ten Suggestions for Preserving Academic Integrity (http://oaa.osu.edu/coamtensuggestions.html)
- Eight Cardinal Rules of Academic Integrity (http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/students/integrity/rules.html)
Class Schedule and Readings

Session 1 (1/8) – Introduction to Course Concepts
- Lundgren and McMakin – Ch. 1 (Intro) pp. 1-7, Ch. 3 (Laws) pp. 23-35, and Ch. 5 (Ethics) pp. 57-70

Session 2 (1/15) – Quantifying and Assessing Risk
- Ropeik and Gray – read Ch. 1 (Intro) pp. 1-20 and skim Ch.19/20 (Air Pollution) pp. 151-180
- Cox – Chap 6 (Environmental Dangers and the Public) pp. 189-222

Session 3 (1/22) - The Risk Communication Process and Approaches in Risk Comm
- Lundgren and McMakin – Ch. 2 (Approaches) pp. 11-22, Ch. 4 (Constraints) pp. 37-54
- FDA Guide – Ch. 2 (Goals) pp. 3-10

Session 4 (1/29) – Planning Risk Communication
- Lundgren and McMakin - Ch. 6 (Principles) pp. 71-82, Part II (Planning) pp. 85-141

Session 5 (2/5) – Mental Models
- FDA Guide – Ch. 8 (Qualitative Information) pp. 65-76

Session 6 (2/12) – Designing Risk Communication
- Lundgren and McMakin – Part III (Putting Risk Comm into Action) pp. read 145-227 and skim 229-283
- FDA Guide – Ch. 20 (Practitioner Perspectives) pp. 205-214

PAPER 1 DUE - MONDAY, February 17th (Midnight)

Session 7 (2/19)– Psychological Processes Overview
- FDA Guide – Chap 6-7, 10, 12 – pp. 41-64, 89-100, & 111-120

Session 8 (3/5) – Risk Information Seeking and Processing
Session 9 (2/26) – Emotion and Protection Motivation

**SPRING BREAK – 3/10-3/14**

Session 10 (3/19) – Social Amplification of Risk

Session 11 (3/26) – Public Participation and Trust

Session 12 (4/2) – Two Case Studies
- Readings TBD

Session 13 (4/9) – Final Paper Discussion and One Case Study
- Readings TBD

Session 14 (4/16) – Final Paper Discussion and One Case Study
- Readings TBD

**PAPER 2 DUE – MONDAY, April 21st, Midnight**