**ENC 4931.001 Special Topics: Communicating Risk (3 Credits)**

Fall 2021, CRN 88833, 3 credits

CPR 462, 9:30-10:45 Tuesday & Thursday

Prof. Carl G. Herndl

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office: CPR 335

Office Hours will be virtual on TEAMS arranged at times that are mutually convenient for student and teacher.

**USF Catalogue description**

Focus of the course will be determined by student demand and instructor interest. Topics to be covered may include legal writing, the conventions of business writing, writing in the medical fields, and writing for the social sciences. May be taken twice for credit with different topics.

**Prerequisite(s):** ENC 3250, ENC 2210 or ENC 3310

**What this course is about**

We now live in a “risk society” in which we face natural hazards and human-made risks every day: climate change, coronavirus, sea level rise, coral bleaching, species extinction. At the moment, we all struggle to deal with the risk of coronavirus. Business and industry regularly have to make policy and communicate about risks their employees face, e.g. miners or industrial workers, or which their customers and clients face, e.g. prescription drug risks.

The rhetoric of risk is about understanding what risk is, the ethics of how we distribute risk in society, how people perceive risk and how best to communicate and make policy about risk. We will read about risk as a concept, explore the research on public perception of risk and strategies for communicating risk, read about environmental justice and the way marginalized communities face disproportionate risk, and spend some time examining how and why citizens can participate in making decisions or policy about risk.

We will anchor our reading about risk in a collaboration with the city of Tampa’s Office of Sustainability and Resilience and their work to develop the city’s first Climate Action and Equity Plan. The plan will try to increase Tampa’s resilience in the face of climate change and sea level rise—that’s the “Climate Action” part—and enfranchise citizens and minority communities—that’s the “Equity” part. How can Tampa manage the risks of climate change in a way that is fair, equitable and just? Both of these projects involve a great deal of risk communication. The collaboration will allow us to balance academic readings with practical action and communication in the community.

The course is designed to explore the following questions:

What is risk communication?

What role(s) can citizens have in risk deliberation and policy making?

What is “risk”?

How can we ethically manage the risks in society?

How do people understand and perceive risk?

How do we communicate about risk?

**Teaching and learning during Covid**

Working face-to-face in a classroom is inherently risky during Covid. As the semester starts, Florida is in the middle of a spike of coronavirus infections, largely from the highly infectious Delta variant. This situation requires some changes in normal course policies and a lot of compassion and consideration on all our parts.

If you get covid or know that someone in the campus community who does, please email assesscovid@usf.edu as soon as possible.

The State University System Board of Governors has published a lengthy statement of policies concerning covid for the 2021-2022 academic year. In part, they write:

**Vaccination Policies**

With the increasing spread of the Delta variant of the COVID virus throughout the country, it is critical and urgent that unvaccinated people get vaccinated and continue to wear a mask until they are fully vaccinated.

* We strongly recommend that state university faculty, staff, and students be vaccinated  for the COVID-19 virus.
* If an individual is fully vaccinated, the chance of developing symptomatic or asymptomatic COVID-19 infection and/or spreading it to others is markedly reduced and  the individual may not need to self-isolate following COVID-19 exposure.

##### **Mask Wearing**

The CDC has updated its guidance for fully vaccinated individuals based on new evidence on the Delta variant as follows:

* To maximize protection from the Delta variant and prevent possibly spreading it to others, wear a mask indoors in public if you are in an area of substantial or high transmission.
* Wearing a mask is most important if you have a weakened immune system or if, because of your age or an underlying medical condition, you are at increased risk for severe disease, or if someone in your household has a weakened immune system, is at  increased risk for severe disease, or is unvaccinated. If this applies to you or your household, you might choose to wear a mask regardless of the level of transmission in your area.
* In general, you do not need to wear a mask in outdoor settings in areas with high numbers of COVID-19 cases, consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings and for activities with close contact to others who are not fully vaccinated.

In light of the Board of Governors’ statement and CDC recommendations, for everyone’s safety, please wear a mask in class. This is not mandatory, but a request.

**Attendance.**

Most undergraduate courses typically have fairly strict attendance policies. Given the Covid situation, I will not require attendance. Coming to class prepared and participating in the discussions, group work and course activities, are important parts of learning. Nevertheless,

**If you are feeling ill and suspect you have been exposed to Covid, please do not come to class.**

This is a difficult time for all of us. There are many ways in which coronavirus and the challenges students and faculty face have made business as usual impractical and forced us to change our expectations. I will try to be understanding and compassionate, and accommodate your needs. I hope you will all do the same.

**Course Goals**

The course will take up a series of related questions about rhetoric risk communication. This will be organized by the topics that organize the readings:

* What is risk communication?
* What is “risk”?
* How do people understand and perceive risk?
* What role(s) can citizens have in risk deliberation and policy making?
* How do we communicate about risk?
* How is risk distributed in society?

**Student Learning Outcomes**

After they have read and discussed the readings and completed the course projects students will be able to:

* Articulate a definition of risk and risk communication,
* Describe the ways people perceive and interpret risk,
* Explain the ethics of environmental justice and design an ethical process of risk management and policy making
* Produce effective artifacts of risk communication.

**Required Course Texts**

No textbooks are required for this course. Readings will be provided by the instructor and by students loaded into the course Canvas site.

**Canvas**

We will use Canvas for all course interactions. All readings and assignments are loaded on the course Canvas page. The course Home page lists weekly modules which contain links to the readings and weekly assignments. All assignments should be submitted through the “Assignments” tab in Canvas.

**Assignments**

Two of the major course assignments (daily reading responses and class participation) are laid out below. The other assignments and course deliverables will emerge from our collaboration with the Office of Sustainability and Resilience and our class decisions about what’s interesting, productive and fair, made largely on Thursday, 9/2.

**Daily “Quotation-Comment-Connection-Question” (QCCQ) response to readings. (35% of final grade)**

Doing the reading, coming to class prepared and participating in class discussions is essential to the course. To prepare for class discussion of the reading that I assign and that your classmates bring, you should write a brief response, **due at 7:00pm the day before we discuss the reading assignment.**

This assignment asks you to do four things:

* Select and quote a passage (and provide the page number) from the assigned reading that you think is especially important or interesting because it tells you something useful or interesting about the particular discourse community.
* Write a brief comment that interprets the passage you quoted and explains the importance and relevance of the passage. What is the author saying, and how does this passage help you think about either the general notion of a discourse community or the activity of a specific discourse community? 100 words minimum.
* Connect the topic or ideas in the passage you chose with other ideas, topics, readings in the course about the notion of the discourse community or about other specific discourse communities. The goal here is to synthesize ideas across multiple readings over the course of the semester. This is “prewriting” for your final synthesis project.
* Formulate a question about the reading for class discussion. Be prepared to talk about this in class discussion.

**Due** These QCQs will be **due online at 7:00 pm** the day before we discuss the relevant reading. That way, I can read them and use your questions and comments to prepare class discussion.

I grade QCCQs on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the best) depending on how well they capture important pieces of the reading, draw connections to larger issues in the course and other readings, suggest productive questions for discussion. I’ll post a couple especially good QCCQs on Canvas early in the semester (when and if I get some) so you can see what a good QCCQ looks like.

There are 18 days when there are reading to which you should respond. I’ll drop the three lowest (presumably 0) QCCQ grades. That brings the number of required QCCQs to 15. 15 required QCCQs times 5 possible points equals 75 total points. Higher math in operation here.

QCCQ grade scale:

A=70-75

B=64-69

C=58-63

D=52-57

F=<51

**Class Participation** **10%**

Participating in class discussion is normally a required part of this class. In a wonderful book titled *Lives on the Boundary,* Mike Rose defined education as using new ideas and words in the company of others. Asking questionsand making thoughtful comments on the readings or others’ comments is a good way to explore ideas and develop your ideas for all the projects in the class. Besides, if you don’t talk, you’ll end up listening to me all day and, while I consider myself a font of wisdom, a repository of arcane humor, and an all-around fascinating dude, you may get tired of me sucking all the oxygen out of the room.

Given the Covid situation and the fact that I am not requiring attendance, it doesn’t seem fair to have a required participation grade. Nonetheless, the course will be much richer and less boring if we have robust class discussions. So, I am going to give a 10% bonus in the final grade for participation. If you are here, but do not participate, you won’t get points for participation. If you are here, prepared and engaging productively with the class, you’ll get the 10% bonus. Performances that fall between no participation and great participation will get partial bonus credit.

**Group Work Policy**

Everyone must take part in a group project. All members of a group will receive the same score; that is, the project is assessed and everyone receives this score. However, that number is only 90% of your grade for this project. The final 10% is individual and refers to your teamwork. Every person in the group will provide the instructor with a suggested grade for every other member of the group, and the instructor will assign a grade that is informed by those suggestions.

**Course Grading Scale**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A+ (97–100) 4.00 | A (94–96.9) 4.00 | A– (90–93.9) 3.67 |
| B+ (87–89.9) 3.33 | B (84–86.9) 3.00 | B– (80–83.9) 2.67 |
| C+ (77–79.9) 2.33 | C (74–76.9) 2.00 | C– (70–73.9) 1.67 |
| D+ (67–69.9) 1.33 | D (64–66.9) 1.00 | D– (60–63.9) 0.67 |

 Note: Students may not take this course S/U (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory).

**USF Incomplete policy**

An “I” grade may be awarded to a student only when a small portion of the student’s work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade. The time limit for removing the “I” is to be set by the instructor of the course. For undergraduate students, this time limit may not exceed two academic semesters, whether or not the student is in residence, and/or graduation, whichever comes first. For graduate students, this time limit may not exceed one academic semester. “I” grades not removed by the end of the time limit will be changed to “IF” or “IU,” whichever is appropriate.

**Schedule**

Week 1: **What is Risk Communication?**

Tu. 8/24 course introduction**/**MEET WITH City of Tampa Office of Sustainability and Resilience (CTOSAR)

Th. 8/26 Cox, Robert. “Human Health and Ecological Risk Communication.” *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere.* Ch. 7. 149-177.

Week 2

Tu. 8/31 Class Cancelled. MEET WITH CTOSR 8:00-12:00 (Seminole Heights)

Th. 9/2 Discuss Tampa’s Climate Action and Equity Plan, our collaboration and what we want to do and produce.

Week 3

Tu. 9/7 Lerner, Steven. *Diamond: A Struggle for Environmental Justice in Louisiana’s Chemical Corridor.* “Introduction,” Chapters 1 and 16 (20 pages total)

Th. 9/9 Hulme, Mike. “The Communication of Risk.” *Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and* Opportunity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 211-247.

Week 4 **What role can citizens have in deliberating about risk?**

Tu. 9/14 **Betty Jeremie from CLEO**

Th. 9/16. Fiorino, Daniel. “Citizen Participation and Environmental Risk: A Survey of Institutional Mechanisms.” *Science, Technology and Human Values.* 15.2 (1990): 226-243.

Week 5

Tu. 9/21 Wynne, B. “Misunderstood misunderstandings: Social identities and the public uptake of science.” In A. Irwin & B. Wynne (Eds.), *Misunderstanding Science?: The Public Reconstruction of Science and Technology.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996. 281-304.

Th. 9/23 **Mary Elizabeth Estrada from CLEO: Climate 102**

Week 6

Tu. 9/28 Bev Sauer. “Sense and Sensibility in Technical Documentation.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*. 7.1 (1993): 63-83.

**What is Risk?**

Th. 9/30 Beck, Ulrich. *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity*. “Introduction” (1-8)

Week 7

Tu. 10/5 30 Danish, Robert. “Political Rhetoric in a World Risk Society.” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 40.2 (2010): 172-192.

Th. 10/7 Shrader-Frechette, Kristin. “Introduction.” In *Environmental Justice; Creating Equity, Reclaiming Democracy.* New York: Oxford Univ. Press. 2002; 3-22.

Week 8

Tu. 10/12 Rob Nixon. *Slow Violence* *and the Environmentalism of the Poor.* “Introduction” pages 1-22 and 39-10.

**How do people understand and interpret risk?**

Th. 10/14 Kahan, Dan and Braman, Donald. “Cultural Cognition and Public Policy.” *Yale Law and Policy Review*. 24.1 (2006): 149-172.

**Week 9**

Tu. 10/19 Eubanks, Phillip. “Reasoning Backwards is Reasoning Forwards.” *The Troubled Rhetoric and Communication of Climate Change.* New York: Routledge, 2015. 48-67.

Th. 10/21 class cancelled Woot Woot!

**Week 10 How can we communicate risk?**

Tu. 10/26 Slovic, P., et al., 2004. “Risk as analysis and risk as feelings: some thoughts about affect, reason, risk, and rationality.” *Risk Analysis* 24, 311–322.

Th. 10/28 Meyer, John. “Introduction: The Resonance Dilemma and Environmental Social Criticism.” *Engaging the Everyday: Environmental Social Criticism and the Resonance Dilemma*. Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2015. 1-21.

**Week 11**

Tu. 11/2 **OPEN**

Th. 11/4 Lejano, Raul P., Tavares-Reager, Joana & Berkes, Fikert. “Climate and Narrative: Environmental Narrative in Everyday Life.” *Environmental Science and Policy* 31 (2013): 61-70.

**Week 12**

Tu. 11/9 Richards, Daniel. “Story Mapping and Sea Level Rise: Listening to Global Risks at Street Level.” *Communication Design Quarterly*. 2020 CDQ 10.1145/3375134.3375135.

Th. 11/11 **Veteran’s day holiday**

**Week 13**

Tu. 11/16 Stephens, Sonia, Denise DeLorme & Scott Hagen. “Evaluation of the Design Features of Interactive Sea-Level Viewers for Risk Communication.” *Environmental Communication.* 11.2. (2017);248-262.

Th. 11/18 **OPEN New MEDIA AND RISK ARTICLE**

Week 14

Tu. 11/23 Class Cancelled

Th. 11/25 Thanksgiving Holiday

Week 15

Tu. 11/30 Open: workshop/presentations (Garraus :affect in risk comm; Littlejohn: climate gentrification; Mitchell: env. justice and anthropocentric action)

Th. 12/2 Open: workshop/presentations (Panzo: extreme heat; Morgan: Cultural cognition; Grover: Risk and illustration and social media; Konger: Toxic Tourism; Banskota: communicating climate risk in Nepal

Final exam period: Thursday 12/9 7:30-9:30 (I don’t give finals, but this is the last day to submit materials for final grades. 7:30 in the morning! Really?)

University and Course Policies

**University policies are available at:** <https://www.usf.edu/provost/faculty/core-syllabus-policy-statements.aspx>

**Inclusion Statement.**

I believe in the value of diverse learning spaces. As such, this class will value and respect those of diverse backgrounds including but not limited to: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, culture, and religion. Please be sure to inform me of what name and pronoun you want to go by. I will make every effort to ensure that an inclusive environment exists for all students. If you have concerns or suggestions for improving the classroom climate, please do not hesitate to speak with me.

**Accessibility and Students with Disabilities**

I believe that every student should have easy and appropriate access to classes, learning and community participation. I encouragestudents with a disability who require an accommodation to consult with me during the first week of class. I will do whatever I can to accommodate your needs and make the course a pleasant and productive experience for you. Each student making this request must bring a current “Memorandum of Accommodations” from the office of Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Contact SAS at 974-4309 or email: sas-info@usf.edu. I will accommodate your specific needs as much as possible and keep these arrangements confidential. If you have a disability that makes it difficult for you to leave the building in case of emergency, please let me know. For more information about student responsibilities related to disability accommodations, see <https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-accessibility/>

**Sexual Misconduct/Sexual Harassment Reporting**

Sexual assault and harassment are continuing problems in American society and in our community. I will do what I can to make you all feel safe, respected and secure in our class. USF is committed to providing an environment free from sex or gender discrimination, including sexual harassment and sexual violence (USF System Policy 0-004).

The USF Title IX policy states:

Title IX provides federal protections for discrimination based on sex, which includes discrimination based on pregnancy, sexual harassment, and interpersonal violence. In an effort to provide support and equal access, USF has designated all faculty (TA, Adjunct, etc.) as Responsible Employees, **who are required to report any disclosures of sexual harassment, sexual violence, relationship violence or stalking**. The Title IX Office makes every effort, when safe to do so, to reach out and provide resources and accommodations, and to discuss possible options for resolution.  Anyone wishing to make a Title IX report or seeking accommodations may do so online, in person, via phone, or email to the Title IX Office. For information about Title IX or for a full list of resources please visit: <https://www.usf.edu/title-ix/gethelp/resources.aspx>. *If you are unsure what to do, please contact Victim Advocacy – a confidential resource that can review all your options – at 813-974-5756 or**va@admin.usf.edu**.*

**Email policy**

Please use your official USF email account for all course correspondence. I will send you emails through Canvas and, sometimes, from my university account to your university address. If you use non-USF servers and accounts, your email may well end up as Spam and not get read.

**Counseling Center**

The Counseling Center promotes the wellbeing of the campus community by providing culturally sensitive counseling, consultation, prevention, and training that enhances student academic and personal success. Contact information is available [online](https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/counseling-center/about-us/contact-us.aspx).

**Writing Studio**

The Writing Studio is a free resource for USF undergraduate and graduate students. At the Writing Studio, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you, at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, email writingstudio@usf.edu or call 813-974-8293.

**HB 233 policies “ Intellectual Freedom and Viewpoint Diversity.”**

- Students with disabilities will continue to have appropriate accommodations for recordings as established by [SAS](https://www.usf.edu/student-affairs/student-accessibility/).

- Students may record class lectures which will be considered instructor-delivered academic content. No recordings of other students, class participation, or discussion will be permitted.

- Students do not need advance permission or to provide notice to record. But, students must monitor their recording so that it does not include participation by other students.

- Students may not publish (post or share) the recordings except as provided by statute. In the event permission is requested to publish (post or share), the student’s request and instructor’s consent must be in writing.

- Students and instructors are responsible for compliance with the statute and related potential sanctions. Misuse of the recordings may result in referrals as possible violations of the student code of conduct or considered academic disruptions.

- Additional links for reference:

* [House Bill 233 (2021): Postsecondary Education](https://nam04.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.flsenate.gov%2FSession%2FBill%2F2021%2F233%2FBillText%2Fer%2FPDF&data=04%7C01%7Ccgh%40usf.edu%7Ca91e5718eeb048b087e408d95c2c5cae%7C741bf7dee2e546df8d6782607df9deaa%7C0%7C0%7C637642168013369233%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C1000&sdata=Ytq4BN5vq9iaZNzRWMksijqgShoe9rn7sjNwBf7G6eA%3D&reserved=0)
* [USF Regulation 3.025](https://usf.app.box.com/v/usfregulation3025), Disruption of Academic Process
* [USF Regulation 6.0021](https://usf.app.box.com/v/usfregulation60021), Student Code of Conduct

USF statement on Classroom Devices/Student Recording:

Students may, without prior notice, record video or audio of a class lecture for a class in which the student is enrolled for their own personal, educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach enrolled students about a particular subject. Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to lab sessions, student presentations (whether individually or part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty member is prohibited. Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation and class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. **Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the USF Student Conduct Code (**<https://usf.app.box.com/v/usfregulation60021>**).**

**Incompletes**

The current university policy concerning incomplete grades will be followed in this course. For USF Tampa undergraduate courses and USFSM undergraduate and graduate courses: An “I” grade may be awarded to a student only when a small portion of the student’s work is incomplete and only when the student is otherwise earning a passing grade. The time limit for removing the “I” is to be set by the instructor of the course. For undergraduate students, this time limit may not exceed two academic semesters, whether or not the student is in residence, and/or graduation, whichever comes first. “I” grades not removed by the end of the time limit will be changed to “IF” or “IU,” whichever is appropriate.

**Technology Requirement**

Students are required to have regular access to a computer, the internet, a word processor, Canvas, USF email, and a printer. There are many technology labs on campus that students can use at no extra cost, so students should have regular access to all required technology via the USF campus resources. The [USF Digital Media Commons Links to an external site.](http://www.lib.usf.edu/dmc/)is also available for student use. The DMC is an excellent and recently expanded “multimedia production area which provides equipment, instruction, space, and assistance” for students to use design equipment and software.

In the event of a USF service disruption that affects all students, instructors will notify students how to submit assignments.

**Academic integrity and plagiarism**

Essentially, plagiarism refers to using another writer's words or ideas without proper attribution and citation. This boils down to doing your own work and giving credit to others when you copy and use their words. You can’t copy and paste materials from the web or an article, book chapter or another student’s paper into your writing without acknowledging the source of the materials. And buying a paper off the internet is the equivalent to an academic felony. **If I catch someone plagiarizing, I will give them an “F” in the course and turn them over to the university’s disciplinary mechanism.** The final decision on an academic integrity violation and related academic sanction at any USF System institution shall affect and be applied to the academic status of the student throughout the USF System, unless otherwise determined by the independently accredited institution.

**Academic Grievance Procedures**

The purpose of these procedures is to provide all undergraduate and graduate students taking courses within the University of South Florida System an opportunity for objective review of facts and events pertinent to the cause of the academic grievance. An “academic grievance” is a claim that a specific academic decision or action that affects that student’s academic record or status has violated published policies and procedures, or has been applied to the grievance in a manner different from that used for other students.

If a serious issue or conflict arises, the student should first make an attempt to reach a satisfactory resolution with the course instructor. If the instructor and student are unable to resolve the situation to their mutual satisfaction, the student may, *within three weeks of the incident*, file a letter of notification with Dr. Joyce Karpay, the Assistant to the Chair of the English Department

**Student Conduct**Students are expected to come to class prepared, having read or completed the day’s assignment. Students may expect to be called on in class. Please silence all cell phones before class begins. Also, students are not permitted to sell notes or tapes of class lectures.

**Disruption to Academic Process**

Disruptive students in the academic setting hinder the educational process. Disruption of the academic process is defined as the act, words, or general conduct of a student in a classroom or other academic environment which in the reasonable estimation of the instructor: (a) directs attention away from the academic matters at hand, such as noisy distractions, persistent, disrespectful or abusive interruption of lecture, exam, academic discussion, or general University operations, or (b) presents a danger to the health, safety, or well-being of self or other persons.

**Emergency Policy**In the event of an emergency, it may be necessary for USF to suspend normal operations. During this time, USF may opt to continue delivery of instruction through methods that include but are not limited to: Canvas, TEAMS, Skype, and email messaging and/or an alternate schedule. It’s the responsibility of the student to monitor Canvas for course specific communication, and the main USF, College, and department websites, emails, and MoBull messages for important general information.

**Electronics in class** Many of you will work on a laptop computer in class; it is a useful tool. It can also be a problematic distraction for you and those around you. You need to know when to pay attention to the computer and when to pay attention to the professor or to other students. If you’d rather do email, Facebook, stream movies, shop or any internet or social media activity unrelated to class than pay attention to class, that is fine; just skip class, avoid being rude, and you can FB away. Many people believe in “multi-tasking,” but all the research in learning and cognitive psychology concludes that multi-tasking harms both learning and cognitive development.

**Similarly, either silence or turn your cell phone off.** Class is at least as important as watching a movie in a theater. If you absolutely have to take an emergency call during class, please go outside the classroom. I realize that you guys have lives and emergencies do happen. Some of you have kids (I do) or take care of elderly parents. But, please, don’t disrupt class with personal phone calls.