MPA 710 (CA): Communication and Design Thinking in the Identification of Organizational Disaster Needs

Joshua Wilwohl, MPA, MA
joshua.wilwohl@mcny.edu

Office hours: By appointment - on the phone or via Google Hangout

Communication: Students are expected to have access to email, either university (preferred) or personal, and check it frequently. I will use email to send updates about this class, as needed. I strongly encourage email as the first means of communication, followed up by a phone call, if needed. The syllabus, lecture slides, videos, readings, and other necessary information are available on Moodle. Please notify me immediately if you have any technical or personal issues that prevent you from completing an assignment.

Course Description

This course is designed to provide you with the understanding of how to use communication and design thinking to identify and address needs as they relate to disasters within communities.

Upon learning about these subjects, you will apply your knowledge within your own community to help an entity prepare for—and possibly respond to—a disaster.

This course is the first of three constructive action (CA) courses. The other two you will take consecutively during the next two semesters. Upon completion of all three, you will present a substantial piece of work (comprised of the work you completed in the three courses) that shows your mastery in emergency management.

You are expected to have a basic understanding of your community. This means who lives in it, its weaknesses, its strengths, the structure of its government and first responders, and the services available.

Yes, this means you must pick up the phone, call, and talk with people in your community. This also means you must visit some of these people and discuss issues face-to-face. When it comes to an emergency, communication is vital, and who to communicate with is even more important.

Remember: The right information at the right time to the right people saves lives.

Getting Started and Class Details

Attendance
Success in this course is dependent on your active participation and engagement throughout the course. As such, students are required to complete all assignments by the due date and to actively participate in class discussions.

Class Labels
Within Moodle, you will see labels: LESSON, READ, WATCH, LISTEN, DISCUSSION, REVIEW, and ASSIGNMENT.

- LESSON is a PDF and/or an interactive slide presentation of the week's lesson with notes.
- READ is attached to the articles and whitepapers you must read.
- WATCH is attached to videos you must view.
- LISTEN is attached to audio files you must hear.
- DISCUSSION is an interactive feature between your peers, and you and me. It is done either in a Moodle forum, via Google Hangout, or on the phone.
- REVIEW is attached to information that you can review at any time.
- For ASSIGNMENT, most weeks have an assignment forum with a deadline. Other weeks may have written assessments. You are expected to complete each assignment on time. Failure to do so will result in a reduction of 2 percentage points each day the assignment is late. I expect these forums to be active and to help each of you by learning from your peers. Further information about assignment forums and assessments is provided in the assignment forums and assessments section.

Discussions
Making sure you understand the material presented is incredibly important. As a result, I will conduct discussions with the class, or individually, throughout the term. Think of this as office hours or "coffee with the professor." We will discuss via email the best time for a chat. In addition, each week will have discussion questions that you must answer in a Moodle forum.

Assignment Forums and Assessments
Some weeks have assignment forums. These forums are where you will respond to questions and provide help to other students. They are a peer-to-peer learning experience. For example, you will post your answer to the question(s) provided. You will then read peers' answers and

respond with robust insight. There is no word limit to the answers or responses, but they must provide knowledge of the subject discussed. A response of "I agree/don't agree" does not count.

To use these forums, log into Moodle and look for ASSIGNMENT within a lesson. If it's a forum, select it, read the instructions, and respond. Once you submit your answer, you will have 30 minutes to edit it. You may then look at other people's responses and reply, as necessary.

For assessments, these are written papers that do not require a response by peers. You will submit these via Moodle, as instructed.

Review

Following each assignment, I will review your response(s) and reply within 48 hours. For the assignment forums, as long as you show you are on task and submit your response(s) on time, you will not lose points. Assessments will be formally graded and returned with feedback. You have 48 hours upon receiving feedback to challenge the grade. To do so, provide a detailed email to me for review.

Journal

As part of your final assignment, you will keep a journal about your interactions within the community from the start of the semester to the end of it. This journal will be online via Penzu. You will turn over your entries at the middle and end of the semester. The journal will help you write the final assignment, and it will be used as you continue through the constructive action. Put as much detail as you can in the journal: the people you meet, the vulnerabilities you see, the contacts you make. Some weeks have specific journal entries, but you are expected to keep this journal as up-to-date as possible. Doing so will make the final assignment easier. The journal will not be graded separately. It will be rolled into your midterm and final.

Penzu has granted a 50 percent discount for students enrolled in this course. I will provide more information about this discount in the Announcements forum.

Final

The final assignment in this class carries on to the next semester's constructive action class. You will build upon this assignment as you move through creating a substantial piece of work that you will present to faculty prior to graduation. Consider this the first of three building blocks, and the foundation for the other two.

The final assignment will be to identify an entity within your community that is vulnerable to a particular threat, interact with that entity, and begin discussions to mitigate the threat.

You will show this in the form of a detailed paper that walks through your actions within the community during the 14 weeks. I will provide you with more information later in the semester.

Grading
Assignment Forums (including responses): 10 percent
Presentations/Quizzes: 15 percent
Midterm: 25 percent
Final (including journal): 50 percent

A	Outstanding	95	4.0
A-	Excellent	91	3.6
B+	Very Good	88	3.3
B	Good	85	3.0
B-	Competent	81	2.6
C+	Fair	78	2.3
C	Satisfactory	75	2.0
EI	Extended Incomplete	0	0.0
F	Failure	0	0.0
FNS	Failure No Show	0	0.0
FWD	Failure Withdraw	0	0.0
I	Incomplete	0	0.0
P	Pass	0	0.0

Lesson Availability
I will make each weekly lesson available by noon on Monday. For example, Week 2 will be made available Sept. 10. Week 3, Sept. 17. And so on.

Expectations
This is a master's degree course offered via distance learning. As such, I expect you to conduct yourself in a professional manner online and in the field. This class requires work within your community. When you do this work, you represent the university. Act accordingly. Any actions deemed unprofessional and discovered or reported will be reviewed by me and the head of the department. If necessary, a report may also be sent to the student disciplinary committee for review and appropriate action.