

WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE
Interpersonal Communications in Emergency Management Systems
Course Number: EXT 466 (3 Credits)

COURSE SYLLABUS:

Instructors: Judy MacDonald, MBA, MA
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Donna Arnold, MS ABS
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Instructor Biography:

Judy MacDonald, MBA, MA has more than 20 years experience in the field of adult education and training. She has been adjunct faculty at City University, Shoreline, Olympia, and Tacoma Community Colleges where she has taught a variety of courses in management and leadership skills. She is also runs her own small business offering training to businesses and individuals in the area of management, human relations and interpersonal skills. She has first-hand disaster related experience from many years working for the U.S. Forest Service in their fire management program and, most recently, working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency as an instructional designer and trainer. She has worked in several disaster field offices around the U.S. and has trained Federal, State, and local emergency managers on topics related to managing staff in disaster situations. She is certified in Critical Incident Stress Management with the International Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation. She is also certified as a Master Exercise Practitioner (MEP) through FEMA.

Donna Arnold, MA, ABS is a licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in private practice for the past 16 years. She has developed and facilitated group training in a variety of contexts for over 25 years. She has trained trainers, as well as supervised and trained counseling interns. She has worked with the Federal Emergency Management Agency for the past five years and has done disaster field work around the United States. Donna worked in New York City where she developed and facilitated a group process (basic debriefing) to help FEMA disaster staff understand and manage their reactions to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. She also trained other FEMA personnel to conduct this training. She has her certification in Critical Incident Stress Management with the International Critical Incident Stress Management Foundation.

Class Schedule: Fall

Course Purpose: Communicating effectively in an emergency management system is critical given the stressful, fast-paced nature of the environment and the vast amount of

information being presented. The course presents proven interpersonal communication skills and techniques which are essential to develop and use for establishing and maintaining useful, productive relationships needed to successfully complete the goals in an emergency setting.

Course Description: The course examines the interpersonal dynamics of verbal and written communication in relation to emergency management. The course focuses on analyzing communication issues, listening effectively, understanding non-verbal communication, speaking in public and working with the media. Topics include tailoring communication styles to meet the needs of a particular audience, the appropriate situation for different types of presentations, and the value of empathetic listening and effective feedback.

Course Objectives: The overall objective of this course is to assist students in developing skills to improve their interpersonal communication skills in an emergency management system. This goal will be achieved by:

- Identifying the principles & practices of effective communications
- Applying strategies for effective communications
- Assessing personal communication skills
- Analyzing communication needs in an emergency management system
- Developing personal goals & actions for improving communication skills

Course Texts:

Patrick Fanning: *Messages: the Communications Skill Book* (order from bookstore)

Dennis Rivers, MA: *The Seven Challenges: A Workbook and Reader About Communicating More Cooperatively* (available on-line)

Gene Knudsen, Leah Green, Cynthia Monroe: *Compassionate Listening: An Exploratory Sourcebook About Conflict Transformation*. (available on-line)

Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grendy, Ron McMillan, Al Switzler: *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* (available on-line)

Course Readings: Readings from other texts and Internet resources as assigned.

Course Format: Course material will primarily be delivered via issue papers and diverse electronic media with student discussion and participation expected. Students will be expected to apply information learned throughout the course in a term paper.

Student Requirements:

Class participation includes attendance via weekly log-ins for Discussion Board sessions. We expect students to participate in a timely manner each week and do not want instructors or students to have to keep checking a previous weeks discussion board for late student input. The instructors will not go back to completed sessions to catch up on late postings by students if we have not made exceptions for you in advance. Each unexcused session will lead to a partial final grade reduction. Class participation is more than attendance. You are expected to contribute, disagree and engage in on-line discussions by posting a minimum of three substantive postings each week. All postings MUST be submitted before the end of each session unless an exception has been provided by the instructor(s). Late postings not approved by one of the instructors will not count towards the weekly requirement (you will receive a **0** for that assignment), thus will lead to a partial final class grade reduction. You should feel free to ask questions of the instructors if you do not understand any information presented or assignments required of you.

All readings should be completed as indicated on this syllabus. Please note additional readings not shown on the syllabus may be added by the instructors at any time.

Written Assignments: One or more short (1-5 pages) written assignments will be required during the course along with a maximum six-page term paper. All papers MUST be typed, double-spaced using proper grammar, format and spelling with font 12 or larger. Good grammar is very important so you are encouraged to proof read your papers as well as have another person edit prior to submitting your paper(s) for grading. *Unexcused late papers will receive '0' credit.*

Grading:

- 30% - Class Participation
- 30% - Self-assessment paper
- 40% - Final paper

Grading Guidelines:

98-100 = A+	85 - 86 = B-	71 - 73 = D
95- 97 = A	82 - 84 = C+	69 - 70 = D-
93- 94 = A-	79 - 81 = C	68 = F
90- 92 = B+	77 - 78 = C-	
87- 89 = B	74 - 76 = D+	

Incompletes:

Because of the nature of work in the Emergency Management field, accommodations will be made for students when emergencies arise that postpone course completion. As stated above, advance notification from the student and instructor approval is required. A grade of K (incomplete) may be assigned only upon request of the student and agreement of the course instructor.

To receive a job related incomplete, a student must provide documented proof of a job related emergency. A letter from an employer is encouraged. To receive a K (incomplete) you must obtain a contract form from the instructor and negotiate a formal agreement with the course instructor specifying the work done and the remaining work needed to complete the course and earn a grade.

You are encouraged to complete the work agreed upon during the next quarter. If a final grade has not been submitted after one year, the K automatically reverts to a failing grade (Z).

Course Evaluation:

WWU Extension Services has established a policy that all courses and instructors are evaluated quarterly. To facilitate this process, WWU testing Center has developed a secure website on which this evaluation takes place. The evaluation document used speaks specifically to the on-line educational process and experience. A URL is set up during the latter third of each quarter by Extension Services and is forwarded to the instructor. Registered students will be provided the URL by the instructor. WWU Testing Center compiles the evaluation information and disseminates the report after grades have been submitted. Your participation in this evaluation process is strongly encouraged. For additional information regarding incompletes, please see information in the recent WWU catalog.

COURSE OUTLINE

Session I - **Course overview & expectations**
Faculty/Student Introductions
Defining Interpersonal Communications

Objectives: Students will:

1. Define communication.
2. Assess personal communication skills.
3. Discuss communications skills needed in an emergency.
4. Identify personal motivation for improving communication skills.

Session II -

Barriers to Communications

Objectives: Students will:

1. Identify barriers to effective communication.
2. Assess individual communication style under stress.
3. Develop skills to mitigate communication barriers.

Session III -

Communication Skill Development

Objectives: Students will:

1. Improve communication skills.
2. Identify different communication styles & influence.
3. Assess personal communication/influence style.

Session IV -

Non-Verbal Communications

Objectives: Students will:

1. Explain the importance of non-verbal communications.
2. Identify and respond to non-verbal cues.
3. Assess personal non-verbal behaviors.

Session V -

Effective Listening Skills

Objectives: Students will:

1. Evaluate personal listening skills.
2. Enhance personal listening skills.

Session VI -

Giving & Receiving Feedback

Objectives: Students will

1. Learn skills for giving & receiving feedback.
2. Practice giving & receiving feedback.

Session VII -

Written Communication Skills

Objectives: Students will:

1. Discuss the importance of effective writing skills.
2. List key components of an effective press release.
3. Evaluate & recommend improvements for a press release.

Session VIII - **Public Speaking & Presentation Skills**

Objectives: Students will:

1. Prepare appropriate visuals.
2. Discuss public speaking skills.
3. Evaluate another student's presentation.

Session IX - **Working With the Media**

Objectives: Students will:

1. Identify challenges of working with the media.
2. Discuss skills needed for working with the media.

Session X - **Assessing Interpersonal Communications**

Objectives: Students will:

1. Evaluate their progress in improving communication skills.
2. Discuss key concepts learned.

NOTE:

Specific course reading and assignments will be added once the course begins and as it progresses.

This syllabus may be modified at the instructors' discretion, as necessary, to meet the objectives of the course and/or the needs of the students.