

**CMJ 404: Risk Communication
Final Exam**

Directions: You may consult your class notes, readings, and any other material posted on Blackboard; however, you may **not** consult your classmates. I expect that you will abide by UMaine's academic integrity standards in completing this exam.

Your final document should:

- Refer directly to class readings, per the directions below, and any other sources you feel are appropriate
- Be typed with 12-point font, double-spaced
- Include both in-text citations and a reference section at the end of the document. Full APA-style citations for the class readings are provided below.
- Be **5 pages or less**
- Be submitted via Blackboard by **May 5th at 10 am**

All semester, we've discussed various risk communication concepts and theories using contemporary case studies, ranging from binge drinking on college campuses to the effects of silicone breast implants. This semester, however, we've lived through what will likely become (one of) the most pivotal public health crises in recent history. In this final paper, I challenge you to develop your own case study about the impact of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Your paper must include the following sections:

1. **Background:** What is COVID-19? How did it (likely) emerge, when, and where? What are the symptoms? What is the risk to humans? How is the risk currently managed? How might the risk be managed in the future?
 - a. I expect you to include credible outside research, such as newspaper articles or medical sources (e.g., Centers for Disease Control & Prevention; World Health Organization), to back up the information you provide.
2. **Theory:** As students of risk communication, how can we explain possible (or witnessed) reactions to this global pandemic? How might the processes of risk perception and/or communication related to this case be influencing how the pandemic response plays out in real time?
 - a. In this portion of the paper, you must refer to **at least 2** concepts, and **at least 2** readings from the list below. One chapter of the textbook counts as one reading. (You may refer to more than two concepts and/or readings if you'd like.)
 - b. Wherever appropriate, define key terms and use examples.
 - c. I expect this section of the paper to be at least 2.5 pages.
3. **Research question(s):** Finally, I challenge you to come up with at least 1 – but more if you'd like – research question that you think would be interesting to pursue with respect to risk communication and the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - a. While you do not need to explain how you would carry out this research, it should be clear how your question relates to what you wrote about in part 2, above).

Concepts:

Risk perception theory

Risk compensation theory

Optimistic bias

Heuristics and biases

Social norms

Message effects and unintended consequences (e.g., framing, fear appeals, boomerang effect)

Seven developmental stages of risk communication

Social amplification of risk framework (SARF)

News media and risk (e.g., journalistic norms, newsworthiness, impersonal impact hypothesis)

Trust and credibility

The three "fixes" (technological, structural, cognitive)

Public engagement/public participation (e.g., voice, fairness)

Crisis and emergency risk communication (CERC)

Social media and risk communication

Readings:

Textbook: Chapter 1 (pp. 10-23); Chapter 3 (pp. 41-54); Chapter 14 (pp. 208-215); Chapter 15 (pp. 216-227); Chapter 16 (pp. 228-239); Chapter 20 (pp. 288-302); Chapter 22 (pp. 317-329)

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Kasperson, R. E., Renn, O., Slovic, P., Brown, H. S., Emel, J., Goble, R., et al. (1988). The social amplification of risk: A conceptual framework. *Risk Analysis*, 8, 177-187.

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