

Study Abroad
Locations:
Barcelona, Spain &
Lisbon, Portugal



* **Course communication:** We will see each other regularly once we have arrived in Barcelona. Feel free to ask any course-related questions of me in person as they come up. Prior to departure and after we return, I will use Canvas to communicate course-related messages. I also check my email regularly if you have questions about non-course related items.

Your instructor's bio: I am a first-generation college student from Bridge City, Texas. My research interests include organizational whistleblowing, disaster communication, and sport communication. I graduated with my B.S. from Lamar University and my M.A. from Louisiana Tech University. I completed my doctorate at UT-Austin. This will be my fourth study abroad course, all addressing disaster and crisis communication. Prior courses were taught in Peru, Nicaragua, and Panama, all co-led with Dr. Laura Siebeneck of UNT's Emergency Management department.

Disability Accommodation:

The University of North Texas makes reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities. Students needing a reasonable academic accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Access (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the student will request their letter of accommodation. ODA will provide faculty with a reasonable accommodation letter via email to begin a private discussion regarding a student's specific needs in a course. Students may request reasonable accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of reasonable accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of reasonable accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with faculty regarding their accommodations during office hours or by appointment. Faculty members have the authority to ask students to discuss such letters during their designated office hours to protect the privacy of the student. For additional information, refer to the Office of Disability Access website.

Course Rationale:

We currently live in an era saturated with crises and disasters. We recently experienced the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to global economic, structural, educational, and social upheaval. In 2023, an earthquake in Turkey and Syria killed an estimated 50,000 people. Tropical Cyclone Freddy in south Africa resulted in over 600 deaths and displacement of thousands of citizens, while Tropical Storm Daniel resulted in the deaths of over 4,000 people in Libya. Two airline crashes, one that caused 181

deaths and another that resulted in the deaths of all 157 people on board, led to the grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX airplane amid questions about its safety. In 2023, whistleblowers exposed severe corruption at a number of well-known organizations including engineering contractor Booz Allen, Indiana-based Community Health Network, Japanese public relations firm Dentsu, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Finally, recent years have witnessed “Snowvid” shutting down Texas, wildfires in Greece and the U.S. Pacific Northwest, chemical explosions, mass shootings, train crashes in Spain and Canada, coal mining tragedies, and racial discrimination allegations at high-profile companies.

It is no surprise we are bombarded daily with (social) media accounts of crises and disasters. Communication plays a central role in crisis planning, real-time crisis response, and post-crisis recovery and sensemaking. It might even be argued that how we understand the terms “disaster” and “crisis” hinges on social constructions of these words. We are in a time unlike any other in which stakeholders can utilize social media to create crises for organizations and groups, and those same groups can use social media to respond instantaneously. Thus, the purpose of this course is to develop a theoretical and practical understanding of crisis (and disaster) communication in international contexts. This course will address how two European countries, characterized by propensity for a variety of disasters, high tourism rates, and economic uncertainty, communicate about, mitigate against, and respond to crises and disasters.

Location:

Portugal and Spain are located on the western edge of Europe, bordering the Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea, respectively. Portugal ranks 77th in terms of disaster propensity, while Spain ranks 54th (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_natural_disaster_risk). Portugal is primarily threatened by wildfires, heatwaves, floods, and earthquakes, risks which are heightened by climate change. An earthquake and subsequent tsunami nearly destroyed the city of Lisbon in 1755. Spain’s primary risks include flooding, DANA disasters, wildfires, extreme heat, and earthquakes. It has also experienced occasional terrorists attacks. For example, in 2004, the Islamic terrorist group al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for a Madrid training that killed 193 and injured about 2,500 people. This study abroad course provides the opportunity to learn how these countries communicate about, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters and crises.

Purpose and Objectives:

The purpose of this course is to examine hazards, risks, and disasters at the intersections of communication and culture, in a particular geographical region (Portugal/Spain). At the conclusion of this course, students should have a basic understanding of the dimensions of international disaster phenomena that are of interest to communication, public administration, and disaster scholars. They should also possess a rudimentary knowledge of the theoretical and empirical approaches taken toward those phenomena.

Specifically, at the conclusion of this course, students should know:

1. Key communication theories/models associated with risks/disasters including the stage models of disaster, apologia/image repair strategies, organizational learning theory, community resilience, communal coping, and news framing theory.
2. Portugal/Spain citizens and officials’ perspectives on emergency management and risk/disaster communication.
3. The geography, cultures, and languages related to Portugal/Spain.
4. The primary risks and disasters associated with Portugal/Spain.

Required Readings and Viewings:

We will read journal articles, book chapters, news media articles, and watch videos as part of our learning experience. These readings/videos are relevant to the course objectives, assignments, and the term papers. **Readings will be linked in the reading list below OR uploaded to Canvas modules. You will respond to each reading/video in your journal.**

Recommended Textbooks and Readings:

Lonely Planet Spain
Lonely Planet Portugal.

A Useful Website: <https://www.thinkhazard.org/en/report/199-portugal> ;
<https://thinkhazard.org/en/report/229-spain/>

ASSIGNMENTS

Daily Journal (hand-written or typed) that includes:

- a. **Daily Activities:** Your journal entry should include detail about places visited, background information about the place(s) we visited or activities you engaged in.
- b. **Insights gained:** Each day needs to include thoughtful insight about what you have learned/gained from the days' experience, emphasizing disaster, risk, and crisis issues when relevant. What did you find interesting? What did you find fascinating? What were some surprises along the way? The more that you elaborate in your insights the more it will help you to recall the event, the historical background, and the location. This section can also include your thoughts about the group, the weather, personal insights on what you are experiencing from the trip.
- c. **Cultural Information:** This section of your journal includes customs, traditions, language or phrases, animals, politics, environmental uniqueness, activities and events that are unique to the people of Spain/Portugal. What did you find in Spain/Portugal that is considerably different to your thinking as an American living in the United States? You may want to create bullet points in this section so that it will be easy to collect and write down.

Current Events Presentation

At our first in-person meeting (Wednesday, June 3), students will present a current event underway in either Portugal or Spain. If you would like to be more specific, you can focus on Barcelona or Lisbon as those will be our cities of focus. Once you choose your topic, prepare a 6-7 minute presentation on that current event / and or current events that fall under a particular theme. You are welcome to use PowerPoint/Prezi for your presentation, but it's not required. Keep it interesting, informational, and professional. Example: if you were doing a similar assignment on the United States, you might present on the war with Iran, the upcoming World Cup games to be hosted here, immigration enforcement controversies, or the country's upcoming 250th birthday as options.

Here are some good English-language websites to explore for your current event:

<https://euroweeklynews.com/>
<https://english.elpais.com/>
<https://www.theportugalnews.com/>

Participation

Being present and on time for meetings, excursions, and during travel, and actually participating are minimum requirements for a "B" level participation grade. For any grade higher than that, your participation grade will depend on the quality of your contributions. Quality comments include: adding new insights to the readings/excursions/experiences, offering a different, unique, and relevant perspective on an issue, moving the discussion and analysis forward, asking insightful questions, extending rather than repeating others' comments, and demonstrating reflective thinking.

Reading summaries

Read each of the assigned readings and write a one-half page to one-page summary (single-spaced) of the most important implications as they relate to crises/disasters in Portugal/Spain. You can include these summaries within your journal or as part of a separate document.

Term papers

In a 6-7 page and double-spaced paper (**graduate student = 15-18 page paper**), describe key themes you learned about how Spain and/or Portugal interact with crisis communication, disaster response, hazard and vulnerability assessment, and/or risk communication. The direction you ultimately go in is up to you though I recommend writing about some of the most salient themes or experiences you noted as we visited these countries. As with all written assignments, your paper should have a recognizable introduction, body, and conclusion. Be sure to use relevant examples from your observations of the people, guest lectures, and excursions. Your paper must be typed, double spaced, and free of typographical errors. It must also include a list of at least 6-7 scholarly references (**minimum of 12 for graduate students**) and must have a cover page. I have provided exemplars of this assignment in Canvas.

Total points breakdown

Journal	100 pts.
Term Paper	100 pts.
Participation	100 pts.
Readings/videos summaries	50 pts.
<u>Current Events presentation</u>	<u>50 pts.</u>

Total 400 pts.

Grade Range:

A = 360-400 B = 320-359 C = 280-319 D = 240-279 F = < 240 points

Course policies

Attendance/participation - In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. We will conduct this class as a lecture/seminar, performing the roles of teachers and learners simultaneously. This is possible only if everyone prepares in advance for class/excursions by giving thoughtful attention to the assigned readings and assumes a constructive role in class discussions, asking questions, thoughtfully attending to the ideas of others, and sharing your own insights. Students who attend class/excursions regularly will benefit by enhanced performance on assignments and an opportunity to complete the reading quizzes. If you are seriously ill, you may be excused from attending an activity, but you must contact your instructor (e.g. by phone) regarding your illness as soon as possible.

Late work. Except under the most extreme circumstances (and documentation of those circumstances is required), no late work will be accepted. If you encounter an emergency situation of some kind, it is best to communicate with me about it earlier rather than later. It is not fair to others who met the deadlines if I accept your's late. **All assignments are due at their designated times or they will be considered late.**

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences

According to UNT Policy 06.003, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University. Intellectual honesty

is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this course must be your own. Contributions from anyone or anything else **must be properly quoted and cited every time they are used**. Failure to do so constitutes an academic integrity violation, and I will follow UNT's policy in those instances. AI tools such as ChatGPT, QuillBot, Grammarly Premium have their place in helping to make our lives easier; these tools can also hurt your capacity to engage in critical thinking. Please talk with me before using any of these tools for this class to ensure that we're in agreement as to how they will affect your work. **At present, I can think of no reason for you to use an AI program for this course.** If you have ideas to propose about AI, please let me know.

Writing quality assumptions. Every paper you turn in must be of quality, both in content and style. I will not accept papers with grammatical and typographical errors. I expect you to use a computer and to take advantage of the programs that guard against such errors; however, there is no substitute for good proofreading. All papers should conform to American Psychological Association (APA) style.

Completing the Course

Students are expected to complete all assignments for this course during the semester. Assigning a grade of "incomplete" is rare, and in order to request an "I," the student must meet these requirements: a) The student must have completed at least 75% of the course assignments; b) The student must be passing the course; c) There must be an unforeseen and compelling reason why the course cannot be completed on time (usually a medical or military reason); and d) The student must present a plan for completing the assignments within the time period specified in the catalog.

Course rules

1. You're expected to attend all organized activities; your down time is yours but that does not excuse you from missing organized activities.
2. Always travel in pairs or groups.
3. Always have your phone on you.
4. Diligently protect your passport and money.
5. Punctuality is mandatory; your participation grade is partially determined by your timeliness.
6. If a student is detained by law enforcement, the course instructors will NOT alter their plans to address your situation.
7. Regardless of Portugal/Spain's drug laws, you are NOT permitted to partake. See the rule above about arrests.
8. You must be 18 years old to purchase alcohol in Portugal/Spain. If you choose to drink, be responsible, and remember Rules #1, 4 and 5.
9. Be flexible; our schedule, destinations, and activity plans may change.
10. No complaining.
11. * Readings on the schedule with an asterisk next to them are for Graduate students only.

Course readings

Notes for Students

- Complete readings before class or site visits when possible.
- Ensure videos have English captions enabled if needed.
- Maintain ongoing journal entries even on non-reading days.
- Readings are either linked below or will be uploaded to the Module titled “Course readings.” Also, graduate students are expected to read every article, while undergraduate students DO NOT have to read those marked with an asterisk.

Wednesday, June 3

- **Book chapter segment:** *Introduction to Crisis Communication; Crisis Stage Models*

Friday, June 5

- Read this webpage about the Garrotxa Volcanic Field (focus on the Garrotxa section): [Garrotxa Volcanic Field](#)
- **Research article:** “Not Even Hell Must Look like This”—Print Media Narratives about the October 2017 Wildfires in Portuguese Public Managed Forests*

Saturday, June 6

- Watch documentary: Living Among Volcanoes
 - [Watch on YouTube](#)
 - Note: Turn captions (CC) on and set language to English.

Sunday, June 7

- **Book chapter segment:** *Apologia and Image Repair Theories*
- **Research article:** *Lionel Messi's Dramatic Tearful Barcelona Exit: An Analysis of the Club Image Repair and Fans' Responses*

Monday, June 8

- **Research article:** *Revisiting the Best Practices in Risk and Crisis Communication: A multi-case Analysis* (pgs. 377-382)
- News article about poor response during the 2024 Spanish flood disaster: ['We've been treated worse than animals': A timeline of the Spanish flood disaster | World News | Sky News](#)

Tuesday, June 9

- **Youtube news story** - *Spain floods death toll rises about 200:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U-xbSvIndfw>
- **Youtube news story** - *Spain floods: More than 200 killed as anger grows over lack of water and aid | ITV News:* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V2tGFrLzCFw>
- **Research article:** *When Authorities' Response Fails and Citizens Act: Social Media Responses to the DANA Disaster in Spain**

Wednesday, June 10

- **Book Chapter section** – Organizational Learning Theory and Crisis (pgs. 87-94 of document)
- **Research article:** Paché, G. (2025). [Goal-Driven Logistics—Shaping the Soccer Match Experience](#). *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 25(1).

Thursday, June 11

- **Book chapter section** – **Communication and Community Resilience**
- **Research article:** Richardson, B. K., & Maninger, L. (2016). “We were all in the same boat”: An exploratory study of communal coping in disaster recovery. *Southern Communication Journal*, 81(2), 107-122.*

Friday, June 12

- **Book chapter** – *News Framing Theory*
- **Book chapter (undergraduates only)** – *COVID-19 Communication in Portugal Exploring the Relationships between Sources of Information and Citizens' Trust in Governmental Risk and Crisis Communication*
- **Research article:** *When the sender is the message: The communication of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa about the 2017 fires**

Saturday, June 13

- **Youtube video** – *Witness to Disaster* series on the Portugal Wildfires: the video starts at the 44 minute mark and continues until the 1:27 mark: [The Portugal Wildfires](#)

Sunday, June 14

- No assigned readings (continue journal)

Monday, June 15

- **Web article with historical account of Lisbon earthquake of 1755**
[The Lisbon Earthquake \(1755\) — EGO](#)
- **Research article:** *The Lisbon Earthquake in 1755: Contested Meanings in the First Modern Disaster**
 - [University of Delaware Repository](#)
- Watch: Lisbon's Final Hours: 1755 Earthquake (AI Reconstruction)
 - [Watch on YouTube](#)

Tuesday, June 16

- U.S. Department of State: Portugal Travel Advisory
 - [Travel Advisory Page](#)

Wednesday, June 17

- **Research article:** *Enhancing forest fires preparedness in Portugal: The relevance of integrating risk communication with community engagement and development*

Thursday, June 18

- **Research article:** *Awareness, perception and communication of earthquake risk in Portugal: Public survey*
- **Research article:** *Preparing, responding and recovering: Wildfire disaster and rural youth in Portugal**

Friday, June 19

- No assigned readings (continue journal)