

Campaign Crisis Simulation Press Release

Assignment Prompt

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For reasons surpassing understanding, more than the occasional candidate has a closet full of skeletons. Apparently, these men and women are “people of faith” who pray that no one will ever find the bodies. Still, thanks to the press and to folks with a grudge, the American press tends to find out these things.

During campaigns, we discover that some candidates have drunk driving records (George W. Bush), or sexually assaulted their college girlfriends (David Wu). Presidential candidate Gary Hart invited the press to “find something on him” and then let himself be photographed with a skimpily clad woman (not his wife) sitting on his lap while boating on a yacht named “Monkey Business.” Some male candidates skinny dip with under aged, teenaged girls in family swimming pools (Jon Grunseth) or visit prostitutes (Jesse Ventura). Some get themselves caught on film smoking crack cocaine (Marion Barry). More candidates than can possibly be counted have had extramarital affairs and continue the practice once residing in the White House (JFK) and even in the Oval Office (Bill Clinton). Some candidates drink pretty heavily and inadvertently kill young campaign workers (Edward Kennedy), while others get financial remuneration for corrupt-ridden corporations they used to head (Dick Cheney). Some candidates’ crimes are far lesser but still embarrassing when they get themselves arrested for stealing campaign literature (Phyllis Kahn). Some candidates have children who very badly misbehave.

Candidate running for political office also frequently dissemble, say stupid or derogatory things (Donald Trump, GHW Bush, GW Bush, John Kerry), and make racist jokes while standing nearby television cameras (Jesse Jackson).

In short, the prospects for “campaign melt-down” are very high. As the director of communication, it will be your job to respond to a campaign crisis. Although your candidate may have a press conference and verbally answer the charges against him or her, more likely, YOU will be doing this on their behalf. Certainly, the campaign will write a press release responding to the allegations of misconduct.

For this assignment, I want you to respond to a set of allegations that I provide you and your campaign at the beginning of the class period. You will have one hour to write a professional press release responding to these charges. Campaigns frequently are high-stress places with insufficient time to do a job properly. In this case, you will experience the “rush” of responding to a campaign catastrophe and do you best to “manage” the crisis with a quick response from the campaign’s communication director. Draw on your understanding of political *apologia* for help.

We will meet in the computer lab on the 3rd floor of the Humanities building. Be there in a timely manner, as you will have no more than one hour to write a professional press release answering the allegations against your candidate.