

SAMPLE COURSE SYLLABUS

Required Reading

Sund, Steven A. *Courage Under Fire: The Definitive Account from Inside the Capitol on January 6*. Paperback edition. Blackstone Publishing, December 3, 2024. ISBN 979-8874832681.

Course Relevance

This book serves as a **first-person case study** on preparedness, crisis leadership, governance, and institutional performance during a rapidly evolving national emergency. Through the perspective of the operational leader responsible for protecting the U.S. Capitol on January 6, students will examine how **organizational structure, statutory authority, oversight, and interagency coordination** shape decision-making under extreme pressure.

The case provides a practical lens through which to analyze **leadership under uncertainty**, the consequences of delayed decision-making, and the impact of political, legal, and bureaucratic constraints during a high-consequence incident.

Learning Outcomes Supported

Upon completion, students will be able to:

- Analyze leadership decision-making under conditions of uncertainty, time compression, and incomplete information
- Evaluate institutional accountability, oversight, and governance failures during crises
- Assess crisis communications across multiple agencies and levels of government
- Understand how FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) doctrine can break down in practice
- Examine ethical leadership challenges during high-stakes, politically sensitive events
- Identify gaps in policy, authority, and preparedness that affect operational outcomes

Suggested Instructional Uses

1. Case Study Analysis

Students analyze the events described in the book as a real-world leadership case, focusing on:

- Command authority and decision rights
- Mutual Aid and Interagency coordination and friction points
- Resource allocation under constrained authority
- How oversight bodies, policies, and legal frameworks influence decision-making before and during a crisis

2. Guided Discussion Topics

- What decision-making authority did the operational commander have, and how did they use them?
- How did existing governance structures impact speed, clarity, and effectiveness of response?
- How should leaders navigate deference to oversight with the urgency of operational threats?
- What role did crisis communication (internal and external) play in shaping outcomes and public perception?

Discussion Options to Support Learning Outcomes

Alternative Courses of Action (COA) Analysis

Policy, Law, and Authority Analysis

Assessment Options

- Written case analysis (policy memo or executive brief)
- Comparative analysis with other national or international crisis events
- Policy reform proposal addressing identified gaps
- Group tabletop exercise participation

Exercise Options to Support Learning Outcomes

Exercise 1: Pre-Incident Planning Scenario

Timeframe: 30–45 minutes

Students assume leadership roles in advance of a large-scale special event with emerging intelligence indicators.

Exercise 2: Day-of Incident Response

Timeframe: 45–60 minutes

Students respond to a rapidly deteriorating security situation, constrained by policies and incomplete information.

Exercise 3: After-Action Review & Accountability

Timeframe: 30 minutes

Students conduct an after-action review under conditions of heightened oversight, public scrutiny, and institutional pressure