Public Health Communication

COMM 7/8014

PUBH 7014

Course Description

This course explores the communication processes and practices that are used to promote positive change in health behaviors in an effort to improve public health in a variety of contexts. In addition to exploring the research models, theories and methodologies used to disseminate health information and promote behavior change, we will examine issue of health literacy; formats for disseminating medical, health, and wellness information; and the complex, specific audiences that public health communication must address.

Contrary to what was originally planned for this course, we will be meeting remotely rather than face to face. However, this is not a typical online course. We will meet each class period using Zoom, and attendance is required. See the attendance policy further down. If you do not have the technology required for a remote class, please talk to me and we will figure something out. If you can, please use a headset for class, as it cuts down on the echo.

Course Objectives:

1. To understand the role of communication in public health campaigns, interventions, and research
2. To develop an awareness of the complex issues of health communication in the public health arena
3. To examine theoretical models, research design, and evaluation methodologies inherent in public health communication
4. To appreciate the interplay of theory and practice in communication in public health settings and campaigns
5. To begin to recognize the multicultural audiences in public health communication

Course Materials

*Public Health Communication: Critical Tools and Strategies,* by Claudia E. Parvanta, David E. Nelson, and Richard N. Harner. Jones and Bartlett Learning.Available on several sites. Google the title.

Additional readings and videos.

eCourseware

We will use eCourseware for access to class documents (syllabus, calendar, assignment information, assignment submission, readings, etc.) You will submit papers to the dropbox. However, we will NOT use eCourseware email.

Email

You must check your **UofM email** at least once a day, as this is how I will send information to the class. When you email me, please follow these guidelines

* Use your UofM email. (NOT eCourseware email)
* Subject line: PUBLIC HEALTH COMM with topic of your email
* Start a new email if you have a new topic to discuss. Don’t just hit reply to an email that I sent about something completely different.
* Body of email: Be clear and concise. Write in complete sentences, with no text language. Proofread your email. Write it as if you were corresponding with a potential employer (or, perhaps, your major professor!)
* Signature: **Sign the email with your name**.

If you do not hear back from me within 1 day, please email me again. My intention is to respond quickly to everyone’s email, but sometimes I fail to keep track and emails get buried. Therefore, if you don’t hear back from me, it is your responsibility to send me another email. It is not bugging me!

If you email me on Saturday afternoon or evening, I might not get back to you until Monday.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism is a serious offense. Unfortunately, many students (even graduate students) do not seem to understand what plagiarism is or how serious it is. Additionally, the use of electronic sources makes plagiarism easy to commit. But it also makes it easy to detect.

The bottom line is that you cannot use any information, no matter where you find it, without attributing it to the source. Also, you cannot use information that’s “in your head” from past classes or even from experience, without citing it. You might have to find a source to back up what you are saying. If in doubt, cite!

You are responsible for learning how to properly cite your material. I’ve provided you with various resources, along with a tutorial that you must complete. Once you’ve submitted the tutorial, you are solely responsible for any plagiarism that you commit, intentionally or not.

You must complete the tutorial at

<https://www.indiana.edu/~tedfrick/plagiarism/>

Print out the certificate and submit it to me by Sept. 4. It is worth 20 points. If you don’t do it, you’ll lose an additional 20 points at the end of the semester. It takes a couple of hours to complete and is not easy.

Penalty for plagiarism:

First time: 0 on assignment

Second time: Failing course; Initiate process to report to Office of Student Conduct

Attendance

You must be in class each week. After 2 absences, you will lose 10 points for every missed class. Exceptions will be made for professional commitments as long as you let me know ahead of time. If you become seriously ill, or if you have a death in the family, let me know as soon as possible. Exceptions will be made in those circumstances, as well.

Late Papers/Assignments

I will accept papers up to 2 days late, with a 5% reduction for each day. After the 2nd day, I will not accept it.

Absences for Presentations

You will receive a 0 for missed presentations, regardless of the reason.

Class Participation

Your grade for class participation will reflect not only how much you talk, but more importantly, the quality of your contributions. Are you:

* Prepared to discuss readings?
* Listening carefully to others’ comments so that you are not repeating information or going off topic?
* Asking good questions based on the readings, class discussions, pertinent news, information from other classes, etc.?
* Respectful in responding to others?
* A good listener?

Class participation is worth 100 points.

Accommodations

Any student who anticipates physical or academic barriers based on the impact of a disability is encouraged to speak with me privately. Students with disabilities should also contact Disability Resources for Students (DRS) at 110 Wilder Tower, 901-678-2880. DRS coordinates access and accommodations for students with disabilities.

Assignments

Your major assignment will be to develop a proposal for a communication intervention to address a public health problem. Throughout the semester, you will have 6 assignments due, 5 of which will build toward your final proposal for your intervention. These will follow the guidelines in Appendix 3, which starts on page 65. Each of the 5 assignments is worth 20 points.

* Phase 1 due: Sept. 8 Topic description and problem statement. 5 minute presentation
* Phase 2 due: Sept. 29 Problem Analysis
* Phase 3 due: Oct. 13 Intervention Plan
* Phase 4 due: Oct. 27 Intervention Development
* Phase 5 due: Nov. 10 Evaluation Plan

Final Intervention and Proposal due on the last day of class, Nov. 24. 100 points

Topics for Final Project

Some topics have been covered in depth many, many times. These include HIV/AIDS, diabetes, cancer screening, comprehensive sex education, and others. I would like you to stay away from those and think about a topic that particularly needs a communication intervention. Possibilities include:

Vaccination, especially for the COVID-19 vaccination

Gun violence

Sickle cell disease

Blood donation

Organ donation

Health literacy

Environmental injustice

Specific health disparities

Research participation in minority communities

End of life care

A specific aspect of healthcare reform

Domestic violence

Child abuse

Some type of veterinary issue

Medical or public health education

And many others.

Your intervention needs to be targeted to a specific, well defined audience, which we will learn about. It cannot be the public at large. We’ll talk more about that.

Additional Assignment

SOCO report, due Sept. 15

Presentations

**Week 5, Sept. 15**

You will present a SOCO derived from an MMWR from the CDC. 20 points

**Week 9, October 13**

 Each of you will present two theories from Chapter 8. 20 points

**Week 10, October 20**

 Each of you will present your work on your project. 20 points

**Week 11, October 27**

Each of you will report on an article about mental health and COVID 19. These are included in the eCourseware folder for the week. 20 points

 **Week 15, Nov. 24**

 Final project presentations. 50 points

Grading

Graduate school culture has sunk into the mindset that everyone deserves either an A or a B. This is not the case. Please see the formula and explanations below.

Grading formula:

A = 93 – 100%

B = 85 – 92%

C = 77 – 84%

D = 70 – 76%

An “A” on an assignment means:

* You have done **excellent** **work at the graduate level.**
* You have gone beyond the requirements of the assignment.
* Your work shows creativity, original thought and intellectual curiosity.
* You have made effective connections between your outside sources, rather than simply “plugging it in.”
* Your work can be used as an example to other graduate students.
* Your work is free of grammatical and spelling errors.
* By the end of the semester, an “A” means that your work is something that you could further develop for publication.

A “B” means:

* Your work is **good** **at the graduate level.**
* You have met all the requirements of the assignment.
* Your work shows some intellectual curiosity.
* You have used outside sources appropriately and effectively.
* Your work has a minimal number of grammatical and spelling errors (2 – 3 per page)

A “C” means:

* Your work is **average** **at the graduate level.**
* Your work shows little intellectual curiosity.
* You have done only the minimum amount of work to meet the requirements of the assignment.
* You have not used information from your outside sources in any effective way; in other words, you have simply “plugged” the information into your work.
* Your work has several grammatical or spelling errors (4 – 5 per page).

A “D” means:

* Your work is **poor**.
* You did not meet the requirements of the assignment.
* Your work has several grammatical or spelling errors (5+ per page).
* Your work shows minimal or no commitment to engaging the material.

An “F” means:

* Your work is **unacceptable**.
* You put no effort into the assignment.
* You did not do the assignment.

These standards are guidelines; they are not an easily interpreted contract. I have provided them so that you understand that you won’t get an “A” on assignments or for the class simply by completing the work.

Quality of Your Writing

You are in graduate school. Therefore, I expect you to demonstrate solid, if not excellent, writing skills. Your writing skills will weigh into your grade, so if you are having problems, access some of the following resources:

* *Harbrace College Handbook*
* *Style: 10 Lessons in Clarity and Grace*
* The UofM Communication and Writing Center: memphis.edu/cwc
* A private tutor
* An online grammar checker

The quality of your writing is an important factor in whether or not you succeed in graduate school. Content is worthless if your writing is so poor that I can’t focus on the words. However, this is not a writing class, so you are responsible to improve your skills as needed.

Common problems in writing include:

* + Lack of coherent argument
	+ Poor use of evidence in building your argument
	+ Poor organization
	+ Lack of clear, elegant transitions
	+ Weak use of outside sources
	+ Immature writing style
	+ Grammatical errors

Note: We will use APA style or AMA style, whichever one you are used to.

Finally, this is a small, interactive class in which we learn a lot from each other. Be prepared to participate. Read critically. Commit early to a project. And have fun!