

COMM 354: Health Communication

Spring 2014

Professor: Dr. Jody (Koenig) Kellas
Class meetings: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 1:30-2:45, Oldfather 203
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Course website: www.my.unl.edu (Blackboard)

Required texts: du Pré, A. (2014). *Communicating about health: Current issues and perspectives*, 4th ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Additional required readings will be available on Blackboard.

Mission of Department of Communication Studies

The role and mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies are to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, and societies. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages. The department's research, teaching, and service devote particular attention to understanding the ways in which communication erodes and sustains collaboration within and among local, national, and global communities.

Course Description & Objectives

There is a growing awareness that communication is inextricably intertwined with issues of health and medicine. This is true on a personal, intimate level in the way patients and caregivers interact in the examination and hospital room. It is also true on an organizational level in that policies and community relations affect the way that health care is provided and the way that people feel about the providers. It is also evident in media campaigns that seek to educate people about health. At every level, the importance of health communication is extraordinary, but so are the challenges.

People who understand communication are in an important place to help, and their services are increasingly in demand. Communication skills are important for professional caregivers, but that is not all. Health communication specialists work (a) in hospital education departments, teaching medical professionals to communicate more effectively; (b) in public relations, marketing, and human resource departments; (c) in patient satisfaction and patient advocacy programs; (d) in health care administration; (e) in media organizations covering health issues; (f) in nonprofit organizations; and (g) in organizations that educate the public and support public policy and research.

Communication Studies 354 is designed to investigate the nature of health communication. Specifically, through readings, in-class lecture, discussion, assignments, and experiential activities, this class will explore the theory, research, and skills associated with communicating in various care contexts. This will include communication among providers, family caregivers, patients,

healthcare organizations, and in mediated messages in the marketing and promotion of health information and the politics of health care. We will examine the sociohistorical, interpersonal, narrative, and translational aspects of health in order that you may become more mindful, educated, and effective health communicators.

By the end of this course you will be able to:

- Analyze and describe how sociohistorical, social, political, and cultural factors affect health communication and healthcare.
- Articulate the ways in which different models of healthcare affect and reflect health communication
- Explore, analyze, and synthesize research and personal experience on narratively making sense of illness
- Describe the communication of patients, health caregivers, and family caregivers and how the perspectives inform, differ from, and intersect with one another
- Define the role of communication in maintaining health and coping with illness and death
- Identify the various approaches for translating research into practice, including community based participatory research, education, edutainment, documentaries, and key steps in planning, implementing, and assessing health promotion campaigns
- Understand and persuasively articulate how health communication matters to you, to others, and to society

You will demonstrate proficiency of these skills by:

- Performing well on regular reading quizzes and a final exam
- Taking part in class discussions and activities
- Interviewing and writing about community members with health communication jobs
- Researching and writing about an aspect of health communication that interests you
- Narratively making sense of health communication through written assignments
- Creating a *Health Communication Matters* campaign

Expectations

The contributions that we bring to the classroom will largely affect the quality of the learning that takes place. I teach best and the content of this course will emerge most fruitfully when students are actively engaged in the learning process. This means that as students I expect you to be present both physically and mentally, engage in classroom discussion, complete assigned work by the due date, and help create a classroom environment that is supportive, sensitive, and respectful to all members.

Because this is a course about health communication, we will often discuss materials and experiences of a personal nature. Personal examples will help us to effectively apply and understand the course content, but may also at times challenge our comfort zones. In order to foster a classroom environment in which our discussions and personal application will benefit our understanding, we must work together to make it a safe and respectful forum. I expect everyone in the class to respect others' rights to speak, to listen attentively to what is said, and to use discretion and sensitivity when speaking. If you have questions or concerns about this element of the course, I encourage you to bring them up in class or talk to me individually.

Course Requirements and Grading

You final grade will be based on one exam, two papers, in-class reading quizzes, parallel blogs, and a final health communication matters campaign assignment. You will also be graded on involvement, which includes participation in classroom discussion as well as your involvement in several in-class application activities. The grading breakdown is as follows:

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Sociohistorical Interview Paper	50 points
Parallel Blogs	80 (4 at 20 points each)
Parallel Blog Comments	20 (4 at 5 points each)
Involvement	50 points
Reading Quizzes	50 points (10 quizzes at 5 points each)
Narrative Paper	75 points
Communication Matters Campaign	75 points
Exam	<u>100 points</u>
TOTAL	500 points

Grades will be based on the following scale:

500-483 = A+	482-468 = A	467-448 = A-	447-433 = B+
432-413 = B	412-398 = B-	397-383 = C+	382-368 = C
367-348 = C-	347-333 = D+	332-318 = D	317-298 = D-
Below 298 = F			

Assignment/Exam Description

Class Involvement:

This class is designed for active student participation. Your involvement is what will bring meaning and make this class worthwhile to you and to others. I am looking for **quality** involvement, not just quantity. This means that I want you to engage fully in class discussion and listen actively to others. Participation in activities, asking questions, and integrating reading materials into class discussion also serve as quality involvement.

Involvement includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Attending class regularly and on time (you are expected to attend all classes for the duration of the class period)
- Being focused and practicing good listening skills
- Contributing to group discussion
- Participating relevantly and actively in class exercises
- Visiting office hours regularly to talk with me about class concepts, skills, and issues
- Relating class material to the “outside” world
- Not monopolizing discussion or discrediting others
- Demonstrating your understanding of course concepts as they apply to your in-class communication

In-Class Reading Quizzes

These quizzes are designed to ensure that you are completing the reading and engaging in active learning and critical thinking about course concepts outside of class. They are also designed to

help you prepare for the final exam in manageable increments. Quizzes will be open-note, which means if you take notes on the reading prior to that day's class, you may use your notes to assist you in taking the quiz. Notes must be originals (not photocopied) and in your own handwriting. Quizzes will NOT be open book. Quizzes will typically be multiple-choice. There are 11 assigned quizzes. I will drop your lowest quiz grade; therefore your quiz grade will be based on 10 quizzes over the course of the semester. You may NOT make up reading quizzes.

Unit Assignments

As you will see in the Course Schedule below, this class is divided into three units: *Understanding Health Communication in the 21st Century* (which includes an overview of the sociohistorical factors that affect and reflect health communication), *Interpersonally and Narratively Making Sense of Health Communication* (which includes an overview of research and practice on interpersonal health communication and narrative sense-making from patient, provider, and family caregiver perspectives), and *Methods of Translation* (which includes various methods for translating empirical health communication research into practice). Each of these sections includes a unit assignment which are meant to build on one another as described below. *In addition to the brief descriptions below, assignment sheets outlining specific expectations for each assignment will be given during the semester.*

- **Unit 1: Sociohistorical Interview Paper:** The first unit assignment is a paper applying concepts from readings and class discussion to the sociohistorical considerations affecting the health communication of individuals employed in the field of healthcare. You will identify and interview someone in the community who has a job represented in Box 1.1 on p. 4 of your textbook. You will then analyze the interviews by applying and synthesizing concepts from chapters 1, 2, 6, 7, and 12 as they relate to their experiences with health communication.

- **Unit 2: Narrative Assignments:** During the second unit of the course, you will narratively make sense of empirical research and your own and other's health communication experiences through a blog assignment which will culminate into a narrative paper. Both of these assignments may draw from and/or incorporate topics of interest that emerged in your sociohistorical interview paper.
 - **Parallel Blogs and Comments:** Building off approaches developed in the field of Narrative Medicine (Charon, 2006), you will complete four Parallel Blog posts during this unit of the course. *Parallel* refers to writing from both an academic/critical scholarly perspective and a personal narrative perspective. Parallel Blogs, therefore, are those that (a) provide a public blog reflection on the reading assigned for the day and (b) a private narrative reflection on how the readings resonate with your own personal experiences. In order to facilitate the most engaged classroom discussion, you will comment on at least one other person's blog before our class meeting. ***Blogs are due by 9 PM the day prior to the class meeting on which they are listed on the syllabus.***
 - **Narrative Paper:** Building from your parallel blog, you will research a topic of interpersonal health communication that emerged in your own narratives. Specifically, you will expand upon the narrative you wrote in one of your blogs and

reflect and write about an area of health communication that you have directly experienced. You will be expected to integrate course materials and outside sources (empirical articles) into your discussion and analysis of your personal narrative.

- **Unit 3: “Health Communication Matters” Awareness Campaign:** Building off of the topic you wrote about for your interview paper and/or your narrative paper, you will design a campaign that highlights the importance of health communication to a specific audience. These will be in the form of print, webpage, video, education, edutainment, documentary, play/skit or other campaigns and will be presented to the rest of the class. For example, I might design a print campaign (e.g., poster) targeted toward encouraging medical practitioners to embrace palliative care and collaborative health communication. On this poster, I might show two contrasting images – one where the patient looks like a puzzle, divided up with different type of practitioner labels on each part of the body (representing the current biomedical model) versus one where all those different providers are circled around and touching the patient (representing a patient-centered approach to palliative care). The point of this assignment is to persuade specific others about the importance of a particular aspect of health communication, make them aware of health communication, and show them why health communication matters. You will pair your campaign with a written analysis of your project.

Exam

There will be one, cumulative final exam testing your knowledge of health communication concepts across units. The exam will be most likely in essay format and essay questions will be given in advance of the exam. Review guides/summaries will be provided at the end of each unit to assist you in preparing for the final exam.

Course Policies

Late Papers and Make-up Work: Late papers are not generally accepted and will only be considered for what I consider to be emergency situations. **You must discuss these with me at least 24 hours prior to the due date.** If I choose to accept an overdue paper, it will receive a grade deduction of 10% for each day late (calendar days, including weekends). No late work will be accepted one week after due date. The **final exam, reading quizzes, and parallel blogs** cannot be made up.

In-Class Etiquette: Your timely presence is required in this course. Tardiness is disruptive to your fellow students and me. Please be sure to turn cell phones off before entering the classroom and avoid talking to your peers during class lecture and discussion. Talking on the phone, reading non-course materials (e.g., the paper, readings for another class), surfing the web, checking facebook, and texting are **unacceptable** behaviors, and you may be asked to leave class if I see you engaging in any of them. These behaviors may also adversely affect your involvement grade. Laptops should only be used for notetaking, if at all. If I see that you are going online during class I will ask you to stop bringing your laptop to class and to take hand written notes.

Accommodations: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the instructor for a confidential discussion of their individual needs for academic accommodation. It is the policy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln to provide flexible and individualized accommodation to students with documented disabilities that may affect their ability to fully participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. To receive accommodation services, students must be registered with the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office, 132 Canfield Administration, 472-3787 voice or TTY.

Course Credit: Students taking this class pass-fail and Communication Studies majors must earn a grade of 74% (C) or better to receive credit for this course.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and grounds for university action. According to the University’s Undergraduate Bulletin (2013-2014), plagiarism is considered an act of Academic Dishonesty and is defined as, but not limited to “Presenting the work of another as one’s own (i.e., without proper acknowledgment of the source) and submitting examinations, theses, reports, speeches, drawings, laboratory notes or other academic work in whole or in part as one’s own when such work has been prepared by another person or copied from another person.” Any assignment found to be plagiarized will be given an “F” grade and may be grounds for failing the course. It is the policy of the Department of Communication Studies to file a report with the Dean of Students for any infraction (no matter how minor it may seem). It is your responsibility as a student to familiarize yourself with and adhere to these guidelines (see <http://stuafs.unl.edu/ja/code/three.shtml> for the university policies and descriptions of all academic dishonesty and <http://www.unl.edu/writing/avoiding-plagiarism> for helpful tips on avoiding plagiarism). It is my responsibility to report any cases of cheating or plagiarism to the administration. All assignments must be your own original work and must be prepared specifically for this course.

Tentative Course Schedule

*Indicates readings available on Blackboard

Date	Content	Readings	Assignment Due
Understanding Health Communication in the 21st Century			
T 1/14	Introduction to the Course		
Th 1/16	Why is Health Communication Important?	Chapter 1	Reading Quiz
T 1/21	Sociohistorical Considerations	Chapter 2	Reading Quiz
Th 1/23			
T 1/28	Public & Political Considerations	Chapter 12	Reading Quiz
Th 1/30	Social Considerations	Chapter 6	Reading Quiz
T 2/4	Cultural Considerations	Chapter 7	Reading Quiz
Th 2/6	Stigma & Mental Health <i>Guest speaker: Elizabeth Flood</i>	Reading TBA	
T 2/11	Film & Interview Paper Wrap Up		Interview Paper due
Interpersonally & Narratively Making Sense of Health			
Th 2/13	Patient-Caregiver	Chapter 3	Reading Quiz
T 2/18	Communication		

Th 2/20	Narrative Medicine, Perspective-Taking, Parallel Blogs	Charon (2009)* Charon (2006)*(7&8)	Reading Quiz
T 2/25	Patient Perspectives	Chapter 4	Parallel Blog 1 due by 9 PM on Monday 2/24
Th 2/27	Communication in the Cancer Clinic <i>Guest Speaker: Dr. Wayne Beach</i>	Reading TBA	
T 3/4	Narratives of Illness <i>Guest speaker: Kathy Castle</i>	Frank*	Parallel Blog 2 due by 9 PM on Monday 3/3
Th 3/6	Health Caregiver Perspectives	Chapter 5	Reading Quiz
T 3/11	Health Caregiver Perspectives	Sunwolf & Frey*	
Th 3/13	Family Caregiver Perspectives	Chapter 8	Parallel Blog 3 due by 9 PM on Wednesday 3/12
T 3/18	Family caregivers: Social support & Silence	Canary* Zhang & Siminoff*	Reading Quiz
Th 3/20	Death & Dying: Palliative Care <i>Guest Speaker: Dr. Lisa Mansur</i>	Reading TBA*	Parallel Blog 4 due by 9 PM on Wednesday 3/19
T 3/25	SPRING BREAK		
Th 3/27	SPRING BREAK		
T 4/1	Death & Dying: Final Conversations <i>Guest Speaker: Kerri Denell</i>	Keeley & Koenig Kellas*	
Th 4/3	Narrative Paper Presentations and Wrap Up		Narrative Paper due
Methods of Translation			
T 4/8	Community Interventions	Hecht & Miller-Day*	
Th 4/10	Community-based Participatory Research	Latowsky* Koh et al.*	Reading Quiz
T 4/15	Education	Wittenberg-Lyles et al.*	
Th 4/17	Edutainment & Documentaries <i>Film: The art of the Possible</i>	Beach*	
T 4/22	Health Campaigns	Chapter 13	
Th 4/24	Health Campaigns	Chapter 14	Reading Quiz
T 4/29	Health Communication Matters Presentations		Communication Matters Campaign due
Th 5/1	Health Communication Matters Presentations		

Final Exam: Wednesday, May 7, 1:00 to 3:00 PM