COMM 955
Communication, Medicine, and Health Equity
Spring 2018

Professor: Dr. Angela Palmer-Wackerly
Class meetings: Wednesday (2:00 pm – 5:00 pm); Oldfather 438
Office: Oldfather 424
Office hours: T/Th: 2:00 pm-3:00 pm, or as needed by appointment
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* Additional required readings/podcasts will be available on Canvas.
** Additionally, I may assign more/less reading/homework as the course continues to enhance your learning.

Mission of Department of Communication Studies
The mission of the faculty and students of the Department of Communication Studies is to examine human symbolic activity as it shapes and is shaped by relationships, institutions, technology, and culture. This work concerns the creation, analysis, and critique of messages ranging from face-to-face to digital media contexts. The department’s research and teaching devote particular attention to scholarly initiatives aimed at understanding and explaining the role of communication in (a) facilitating civic engagement, mediating public controversies, and organizing for social change, (b) constituting individual and family health, promoting healthy behaviors, and helping persons navigate relational challenges, and (c) creating, maintaining, and challenging personal, social, and community identity in a complex and diverse world.

Course Description and Objectives
This graduate seminar examines the differences across groups in health status and health care access and availability throughout local, state, regional, national, and global levels. According to the Centers for Disease & Control Prevention (CDC), health disparities are preventable differences in health outcomes between populations. Specifically, health disparities occur within groups based on gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, geographic region, age, sexual orientation, and disability. Some of the health outcomes we will examine include: lower overall well-being, late-stage diagnoses, lower health literacy, higher participation in risky behaviors, limited access to quality medical care and effective social support, and higher morbidity and mortality.
This course will place a particular emphasis on the role of communication in defining health problems and creating communication-based intervention solutions. The course will be structured within the social ecological perspective, in which health behavior is influenced by several layers of communication, including the individual (e.g., individual health beliefs), relational (e.g., physician-patient, family-patient), organizational (school, hospital, church), community (rural, urban, suburban), and policy (legal freedoms and constraints) levels.

Some of these topics will interest you more than others. I ask that you engage with the material in-depth EVERY week to synthesize with your current research, challenge your current research or inspire you to lead your research in a new direction. **Much of the learning in this class will be guided by me, but directed by you.** Think of me as your coach: I will do my best to challenge you in your work, but you have to put in the work to accomplish your goals for this course. This is YOUR course; thus, you will be able to tailor assignments/discussions/projects to your interests and your theoretical/applied questions (e.g., critical, rhetoric, public health, interdisciplinary).

As an instructor, I am at my best when we are all fully engaged as a class. To that end, I ask that all of us try our best to thoughtfully prepare for readings, discussion points, and assignments before class. Health Communication as a sub-discipline is focused on theory and application. Thus, all of your work should be guided by theory and have a “real-world” focus for “real-world” impact. If for some reason we are not discussing the theory(ies)/topics you would like to use in your projects, let me know and we can adjust the assignments for you. The goal of this course is to share our interests and build upon them by encouraging and constructively challenging each other (this includes me!). I firmly subscribe to the philosophy that *Teaching is Learning!*

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

**Have a Foundational Understanding of HD:**

1. Explain what health disparities are and how/why communication (on multiple levels) affects those disparities.
2. Identify your perspective and relationship to health disparities and the various ways you have been affected by (as well as privileged to avoid) health disparities.
3. Talk more comfortably about topics with which you may not be comfortable talking about (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender identity) by learning to constructively analyze your perspective/experiences as well as others’ perspectives/experiences.
4. Analyze and describe how multiple factors (not just individual behavior) affects communication and health disparities, including sociohistorical, social, political, and cultural factors.
5. Understand how identities can intersect to increase health disparities.
6. Understand and persuasively articulate how communication relates to health privilege and disparity.
7. Understand past and present communication-based efforts and interventions to improve health disparities, including community-based participatory research, faith-based interventions, education, edutainment, and documentaries.
Synthesize Your Research with HD Research:
8. To actively engage with and synthesize the reading material with your own research interests (i.e., asking theoretical and applied questions, developing and challenging your research, etc.) so that you can deepen your understanding of the strengths and limitations of your research questions, methods, and findings.
9. To understand your unique contributions to the theoretical and applied research of communication and health disparities.
10. To understand how your research fits within the extant interdisciplinary knowledge about concepts/theories/approaches you're interested in (e.g., social support).

Expectations

Your final grade will be based on the following grade breakdown:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points/Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Method of Engagement class presentation</td>
<td>40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof devel: Setting/meeting comm engagement goal</td>
<td>40 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>100 points total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Product (proposal, lit review, etc)</td>
<td>(65 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roundatable discussion of your HD/context</td>
<td>(35 points)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Reflective Statement</td>
<td>20 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>200 points</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Grades will be based on the following scale:

A= EXCELLENT. Greatly exceeds requirements. Shows outstanding levels of creativity, skill, initiative, and/or effort
B= GOOD. Exceeds requirements. Shows substantial creativity, skills, initiative, and/or effort
C= AVERAGE. Meets the requirements in every respect, but does not exceed requirements
D= BELOW AVERAGE. Meets some requirements, but deficient in others
F= POOR. Deficient in most or all requirements

A+ 100%+
A 93-100%
A- 90-92%
B+ 88-89%
B 83-87%
B- 80-82%
C+ 78-79%
C 73-77%
C- 70-72%
D+ 68-69%
D 63-67%
D- 60-62%
F 59% and below
Assignment Descriptions:
You will demonstrate proficiency of the above skills by (More in-depth description to follow):

1. **Method of Engagement class presentation (40 points)**
   Preparing a method presentation for class based on your research interests. All students will choose their method on the second day of class (Jan 17). After the final method presentation, all projects will be combined into a class PDF document of health disparities comm methods that you can take with you after this class/use when YOU teach Health Comm or Health Disparities, etc! This project includes:
   a. **Part 1**: 30-minute class presentation that includes:
      - A 15-minute overview of an assigned method used in health disparities communication: what, why, when, how, where of this method (in otherwords its usefulness but also limitations and challenges)
      - A 15-minute exploration of an interesting/engaging exemplar that helps us deepen our understanding of how this method has been used in research
   b. **Part 2**: Handout that includes:
      - The above information from Part 1 (in an abbreviated, helpful format) that includes challenges and limitations of methods
      - Brief overview explaining how 2 scholars (one inside health comm; one outside comm discipline) are exploring using within the last 10 years and the interesting contributions they are making
      - Promising direction(s) for this method (based on scholar recommendations)
      - And, possible application of method to your own research interests

2. **Prof devel: Setting/meeting comm engagement goal (40 points)**
   This course is about stretching ourselves to engage with a community of individuals who are experiencing/have experienced health disparities of some sort, or interact with health disparities on a daily basis. I want this to be a relatively recent experience with health disparities (as experiences do change over time). We will take the first 3 weeks to think about how you might engage with a community that relates to your research interests.
   This can be anything that is relevant to this course and your research. For example, you might visit a health clinic that serves marginalized populations (e.g., refugees) and interview the clinic administrator about communication and health challenges for refugees or you might interview someone who is homeless about their health/medical experiences and buy them lunch. For me, I want to begin using Twitter to communicate more about health communication and health disparities research, and so I will connect with community groups whose voices are not in the mainstream health narratives. This is about making yourself vulnerable to have more perspective-taking/empathy and compassion with others with whom you may not be familiar.
   When engaging with new groups, we will of course make mistakes and accidentally offend others. The key is to continue to engage while also being mindful of others’ feedback in communicating more sensitively without patronizing them (e.g., trying to 'save' them). HD communication is about working with community partners and to do that, we must listen to and respect their voice(s).
You will then share your experience with our class at the end of the course in a brief 10-minute presentation.

3. **Final seminar paper (100 points total)**
   
The purpose of your final seminar paper (65 points) will be to explore a specific HD and context more in-depth as it relates to your research interests. This can take many forms, but above all, I want it to: (1) stretch your learning and understanding of your own research; and (2) add to your individual research pipeline.
   
   a. A research proposal involving a literature review and methods section for a future study
   
   b. Re-working or adding to an existing research study by giving the study a significant health disparities and communication focus (This must be a unique assignment; however, and may not have been previously submitted in another course, conference, or publication). In other words, you must use course material or other health disparities communication research to substantially revise or create a current research study (e.g., secondary analysis, thesis, dissertation, past research projects that need substantial revision).
   
   c. Another project not listed here, but agreed to by me, that would meet the goals of this class as well as your scholarly goals.

This assignment will also include a roundtable discussion of your HD/context (35 points). Each student will give a 10 minute roundtable presentation on his/her seminar paper, followed by a 5-10 minute question and answer period. I am striving for something similar to “Roundtables on Research in Progress” at the National Communication Association Annual Conference. This is not a formal research talk, but a brief description of your ideas and work in progress. Your talk should be supplemented with some type of visual aid (e.g., 1-2 slides, paper handout of a model or list of hypotheses). Your grade for this assignment will be based on your ability to present your research informally (something you will be asked to do on job interviews) and respond to your classmates. *Thank you to Dr. Shelly Hovick (Ohio State University) for sharing this idea with me.*

4. **Final Reflective Statement (20 points)**
   
   Preparing an end-of-course reflective statement of how health disparities communication fits (or does not fit) into your identity as a scholar (length: 2-3 pages). This statement should show some intellectual growth from the beginning of class (even if you have discovered health disparities communication is not for you). You should be able to articulate your scholarly position within (or outside) the boundaries of health disparities communication in combination with your other interests.
Timely Attendance and Participation
In my courses, regular and on-time attendance, participation, and collaboration is key to quality of learning. I teach best when students are actively engaged, kind to each other, and try their best. Poor attendance (missing more than 2 days) will adversely affect your grades and performance in this course. I will take attendance each day; however, I will not give participation points for simply showing up to class. I will try my best to create activities and assignments that motivate you to learn and help you engage with me and your fellow students, though these will usually not be graded. I ask that you try your best to attend class, fully engage in readings and class discussions, and get to know me and your other classmates.

Course Policies

In-Class Etiquette (Be the Best Version of Yourself): Your timely presence is expected in this course. Although you may be tardy from time to time due to circumstances beyond your control, try to be on time because tardiness is disruptive to your fellow students and me. Please be sure to turn cell phones off before entering the classroom, avoid talking to your peers during class lecture and discussion, and avoid reading/writing non-course materials (e.g., readings for another class, email). In other words, I challenge you to be the best version of yourself in this classroom. We all have unique strengths and weaknesses, and each classroom environment is uniquely successful when each participant contributes their strengths, works to improve their weaknesses, and challenges themselves to be fully present for the duration of each class session. This may take considerable practice, but it is an effective life skill.

Late Assignments: Late assignments are generally not accepted. Exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis. If you are having trouble completing an assignment, please contact me as early as possible to see if we can extend the due date. These extensions are meant for situations beyond your control—accident, extended sickness, unexpected life development. Otherwise, overdue assignments will receive a grade deduction of 10% for each day late (calendar days, including weekends).

Services for Students with Disabilities: The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options privately. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD). If you are eligible for services and register with their office, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so they can be implemented in a timely manner. SSD contact information: 232 Canfield Admin. Bldg.; 402-472-3787.

Grades: Final grades are what you have earned. Therefore, extra credit will not be given at the end of the semester to boost your grade. You will have ample opportunity to increase your grade throughout the semester with assignment grades and participation. If at any time during the semester you would like to improve your grade, please seek guidance from me in advance of assignments.
**Incomplete grade:** A final grade of an ‘incomplete’ will only be given in cases of extreme emergency (e.g., lengthy hospital stays, experience of trauma) and must be approved by me. Determinations of incomplete status will be made on a case-by-case basis. Students who have several absences and are not engaged in class will not be eligible for an incomplete grade.

**Grade Appeals:** In cases where students believe they may have been unfairly evaluated, they may follow the steps laid out by the Department of Communication Studies to appeal their grade. These steps are outlined in this document on the department’s webpage: https://comm.unl.edu/Communication%20Studies%20Grading%20Appeals.pdf

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism means intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one’s own. This includes your own previous work. Plagiarism includes quoting or paraphrasing from other sources without acknowledging/citing the source of your information or presenting quoted material as your own words. You must be very clear about attribution of sources and you must know how to cite sources in a paper. Students who are unfamiliar with how to cite sources should purchase a style manual such as APA (American Psychological Association). Claiming lack of knowledge about standards for writing is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism committed. Come to a faculty member for help if you are at all unsure about any of these issues or seek help at the UNL Writing Assistance Center: 472-8803, Anderson Hall 129. I want to see you succeed in this course, and in your overall future, so please start assignments early and seek help when you need it.

Violations of academic integrity are very serious matters and will result in automatic failure of the class. 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). The work a student submits in a class is expected to be the student's own work and must be work completed for that particular class and assignment. Students wishing to build on an old project or work on a similar topic in two classes must discuss this with both professors. If starting with work done by a group, students must have permission of those group members to use that work.

**Academic dishonesty includes:**

- Lazily/hastily taking notes and using someone else’s language without citing it and/or using quotation marks.
- Handing in another’s work or part of another’s work as your own
- Turning in one of your old papers for a current class
- Turning in the same or similar past or current paper for two different classes
- Presenting a group project as your work solely
- Purchasing or otherwise obtaining research or papers written by another and turning that work in as your own
- Using unauthorized notes or other study aids or otherwise obtaining another’s answers for an examination also represents a breach of academic integrity
- Sanctions are applied whether the violation was intentional or not. You must keep all your original data for projects (i.e. articles) and be prepared to present them to the professor when asked.
It is your responsibility as a student to familiarize yourself with and adhere to these
guidelines in Section 4.2 of the Student Code of Conduct (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.

**Authorship:** All assignments for this class are to be authored by you (or in collaboration with
other students). I will offer guidance for your papers (i.e., serve as a mentor), but need not be
added as an author (unless students are using data created by me). If you would like substantial
help from me after the course (e.g., more than just one-time editing, giving comments), then I
can join the project as an author. Otherwise, I am happy to edit/comment/discuss your papers
and ideas before, during, and after this course as a mentor.

Additionally, if you would like to combine this project with another for a different
course or project, please talk to me in advance of the assignment so that we can make sure
your final product is meeting your learning goals for this course as well as for tasks outside this
course.

**Flexible Course Format:** My husband and I are currently on the adoption waiting list, hoping to
adopt an infant sometime in the next few years. Sometimes, these adoption placements occur
with little notice. If this type of situation were to occur, I will make sure it will work to your
benefit. Thus, I may have to move class at the last minute to an online discussion format for
certain days in order to ensure that you learn the material for this course in a timely manner
that is fair to you. I ask that you check email and Canvas (I will send notifications through both
of these platforms) before class to make sure that you receive any last minute notifications
from me. Thank you for your understanding.

### Tentative Course Schedule

Subject to Change throughout Semester

*Indicates reading available on Canvas

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**Week 1 (Jan 10): Intro to Health Disparities Communication**

*Freimuth, V. S., & Quinn, S. C. (2004). The contributions of health communication to

*Moran, M. B., Frank, L. B., Zhao, N., Gonzalez, C., Thainiyom, P., Murphy, S. T., & Ball-
Rokeach, S. J. (2016). An argument for ecological research and intervention in health
doi:10.1080/10810730.2015.1128021
**Week 2 (Jan 17): The Culture-Centered Approach**

- Intro (pp. 1-16)
- Ch. 1: Culture in health communication (pp. 17-43)
- Ch. 2: The culture-centered approach to health communication (pp. 44-68)

*Course activity: Students choose their method for class presentation*

**Week 3 (Jan 24): Theoretical Approaches to Communication and Health Disparities**


*Course activity: Students decide and share their engagement goal*

**Week 4 (Jan 31): Culture, Identity and Health (*5 readings total, cont. on p. 10)**

**Method Presentation: Narrative Mapping**


**Week 5 (Feb 7): Pathways of Curing and Healing**

**Method Presentation: Grounded Theory (Angela)**


**Week 6 (Feb 14): Relational Communication, Culture and Health**

**Method Presentation: Latent Class Analysis**


**Week 7 (Feb 21): Health Care Provider Communication & Health Disparities**

**Method Presentation: Telemedicine**

Demby, G. & Meraji, S. M. (2018, January 9). This racism is killing me inside @ Code Switch podcast. Podcast retrieved from https://www.wbez.org/shows/code-switch/this-racism-is-killing-me-inside/c0e8d6c8-555d-40f4-8c24-d5a37f33a25f.


**Week 8 (Feb 28): Organizational Communication and Health Disparities**

**Method Presentation: Metaphor**


Week 9 (Mar 7): Health Experiences in Marginalized Sectors

Dutta, M. J. (2008). Ch. 7: Health Experiences in Marginalized Sectors (pp. 175-204).

Course activity: Students share roundtable discussions of their final research papers in-progress

IN-CLASS work day

Week 10 (Mar 14): Culture, Social Capital, and Health

Method Presentation: Photovoice


Week 11 (Mar 21): UNL Spring Break—Enjoy!
**Week 12 (Mar 28): Culture and Resistance**

**Method Presentation: Performance**


**Week 13 (Apr 4): Community-level approaches to Communication & Health Disparities**

**Method Presentation: Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)**


Minkler, M. (2013). Linking science and policy through community-based participatory research to study and address health disparities. In T. A. LaVeist and L. A. Isaac (Eds.), *Race, Ethnicity, and Health: A Public Reader* (pp. 723-734).
Week 14 (Apr 11): OUT-OF-CLASS WORK DAY/KCHC

Week 15 (Apr 18): Health, Culture, and Globalization

Method Presentation: Social Movements as Intervention


Week 16 (Apr 25): Meeting our Goals of Engagement

Course activity: Class Presentations: Where did you go to listen to voices of people experiencing health disparities?

Tuesday, May 1 at 11:59 pm (Final paper is due on Canvas)!