

**Communication 311: Health Communication**  
Spring 2017  
Course Syllabus

M 4:15-6:45 p.m.  
SOC 014

**Instructor**

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Office Hours: Mon. and Wed. 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Mon. 3-4 p.m., or by appointment

**Course Description**

This course focuses on the growing field of health communication. Building on students' knowledge of communication – including public relations, advertising, journalism and marketing – this class aims to help students explore an area of specialization that offers excellent career opportunities in many settings. Through readings, case studies, guest speakers and field trips, the class is designed to provide an overview of what health communicators do and where they work. The class will also provide a broad introduction to physician-patient communication, mass communication, health journalism, corporate communication, communication by non-profit health organizations and government health agencies, and public health education campaigns. In addition, the course will examine a variety of theories used in health communication and explore such national health issues as health disparities, health literacy, patient safety and healthcare reform.

**Course Objectives**

- Provide a foundation of knowledge about the U.S. healthcare system.
- Enable students to synthesize and apply that knowledge through written communication.
- Understand the roles of interpersonal communication, mass communication and new/social media in health communication.
- Explore how communication can play a vital role in achieving personal and public health objectives.
- Provide examples of real-world health communication challenges and discuss how they were addressed by health communicators.
- Engage students in how health messages are developed and delivered and how health communication campaigns are designed, implemented and evaluated.
- Give students practical, hands-on experience researching and developing a public health education campaign.

**Prerequisite**

Any of the following: COMM 210 Principles of Public Relations, COMM 205 Reporting and Writing, enrollment as a graduate student, or permission of instructor.

## **Readings**

No textbook is required. All assigned readings will be posted on Sakai or distributed in class.

## **Course Website**

Slide lectures and required readings will be posted in advance on Sakai. This is designed to enable students to avoid having to take extensive notes in class and as an aid for studying for exams; it is not meant as a substitute for class attendance.

## **Expectations**

Students are expected to be prepared for, attend and participate actively in all class sessions. That means arriving before class begins at 4:15 p.m. and staying for the entire class session. Because this class meets only once a week, missing a class is the equivalent of missing a week's worth of course content. Class participation counts for 10 percent of a student's grade in the course, and if you don't attend, you can't participate. Please inform me in advance if you believe you have a legitimate reason for an absence.

## **Client Project**

Our class will partner with a nonprofit organization to develop a public health education campaign to benefit the community. Student teams will conduct research, analyze the situation and develop a comprehensive communication plan and materials to meet the client's objectives. Each student is expected to spend 20 or more hours on this community based project, as stipulated in the university's criteria for designated Engaged Learning courses.

## **Exams**

The mid-term will cover material up to the midterm; the final will cover material from after the midterm to the end of the semester. Both exams will cover lectures, assigned readings, handouts, field trips and guest speakers. Neither exam may be made up at another time. Please note the dates and times of the mid-term and final exam and plan your travel accordingly.

## **Grading Scale**

A	93-100
A-	90-92
B+	87-89
B	83-86
B-	80-82
C+	77-79
C	73-76
C-	70-72
D+	66-69
D	62-65
F	60 or below

## **Course Grading**

Mid-term exam	30 percent
Final exam	30 percent
Client project	30 percent
Class participation	10 percent

## **Academic Integrity**

Each student is expected to do his or her own work in the course. Allegations of academic misconduct will be forwarded immediately to the office of the Dean of the School of Communication for possible disciplinary action. Loyola regards academic dishonesty as an extremely serious matter with consequences ranging from failure of the course to probation to expulsion.

Academic misconduct includes:

- Cheating on exams or aiding other students to cheat. Any effort to gain an advantage not given to all students is dishonest whether or not the effort is successful.
- Stealing the intellectual property of others and passing it off as your own work (this includes material found on the Internet). Software will be used to identify plagiarism.
- Failing to quote directly if you use someone else's words and to cite that particular work and author. If you paraphrase the words or ideas of another, credit the source with your citation. Please ask me if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism and/or how to cite sources.
- For closed-book exams, academic misconduct includes conferring with other class members, copying or reading someone else's test, and using notes and materials without prior permission of the instructor.
- Turning in the same work for two classes, whether in the same semester or not.

## **Classroom Behavior**

To help create a positive learning community, turn off all phones and keep them in your bag, backpack, or pocket. Laptops and tablets should be used only to take notes or during in-class work sessions on the client project. Be respectful of fellow students and be in your seat when class begins.

## **Accommodations**

Any student with a learning disability who needs accommodation during class sessions or exams should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities to the instructor during the first week of class; this information will be treated in complete confidence. The instructor will accommodate student needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the responsibility of each student to plan in advance to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

Students are excused for recognized religious holidays. Please let me know in advance.

## Course Schedule

(Reading assignments to be completed before class on the date shown)

### Week 1

Mon. Jan. 23

Course overview and introductions

Briefing by Matea Varvodic, director of development, and Rosaura Arellano, new initiatives director, El Hogar del Niño

#### ***Snapshot: Healthcare in America***

Reading: Review El Hogar del Niño website:  
<http://www.elhogardelnino.org/index.php/en/>  
Fox, "United States Comes in Last Again on Health, Compared to Other Countries"  
Goozner, "High-Tech Medicine Contributes to High-Cost Healthcare"  
Leonhardt, "Why Doctors so Often Get it Wrong"  
Levey, "Obamacare Helping Improve Access to Medical Care for the Poor"  
*Modern Healthcare*, "Is Healthcare a Right?"  
Sanger-Katz, "Lost Jobs, Houses, Savings: Even Insured Often Face Crushing Medical Debt"  
Snell & DeBonis, "Why Obamacare is Unlikely to Die a Swift Death"  
Ungar & O'Donnell, "Dilemma over Deductibles: Costs Crippling Middle Class"  
Zuger, "Healthy Right up to the Day You're Not"

### Week 2

Jan. 30

#### ***Traditions, Trends, Success Stories and Alarm Bells***

Reading: Belluz & Hoffman, "America's Brutal Black-White Health Gap: Why Black Men can Expect to Live Five Years Fewer than White Men" (access at: <http://www.vox.com/2014/8/25/6052871/why-white-skin-works-better-than-most-medicine/in/5740388>)  
Johnson, "Why Everyone Seems to Have Cancer"  
Knox, "50 Years after Landmark Warning, 8 Million Fewer Smoking Deaths"  
Kolata & Harris, "'Moonshot' to Cure Cancer Relies on Outmoded View of Disease"  
Park, "America's Health Checkup"  
Parker-Pope, "The Cancer Divide: Tackling a Racial Gap in Breast Cancer Survival"  
Sack, "Research Finds Wide Disparities in Health Care by Race and Region"  
Sataline, "Cash-Poor Governments Ditching Public Hospitals"  
Tavernise, "Obesity Rises Despite All Efforts to Fight it, U.S. Health Officials Say"  
Watch video, "The War on Cancer: From Nixon until Now," <http://www.nytimes.com/video/us/100000002530506/the-war-on-cancer-from-nixon-until-now.html>

Initial organizing and brainstorming session for client project

### **Week 3**

Feb. 6

#### ***Promoting Health Education, Changing Health Behavior***

Reading: Wright, Sparks & O'Hair, Ch. 10 (pp. 259-269)

In-class work on client project

### **Week 4**

Feb. 13

#### ***Planning and Evaluating Public Health Campaigns***

Reading: Elliott, "Steal This Idea, a Campaign Urges"  
White, "HIV Education That Aims to Empower, Not Shame"  
Wright, Sparks & O'Hair, Ch. 10 (pp. 270-282)

In-class work on client project

### **Week 5**

Feb. 20

#### ***Communication by Hospitals and Healthcare Systems***

Visit to communication department of local hospital

Reading: Landen, "Telling Their Stories"

In-class work on client project

### **Week 6**

Feb. 27

#### ***Provider-Patient Communication***

Reading: Brown, "Lost in Clinical Translation"  
Chen, "How Much Can a Patient Learn in a 15-Minute Doctor Visit?"  
Gardner, "For Some Doctors, Empathy is in Short Supply"  
Joshi, "Doctor, Shut up and Listen"  
Parker-Pope, "When Doctors become Patients"  
Topol, "The Future of Medicine is in Your Smartphone"

Mid-term exam

### **Week 7**

No class March 6 (spring break)

## **Week 8**

March 13

### ***Communication by Nonprofit Health Organizations***

Guest speaker TBD

Reading: Kaplan, "Behind Patient Advocacy Groups, Donors are Exerting a Powerful Force, Study Says"  
Kolata, "A Growing Disenchantment with October 'Pinkification'"  
Perry, "How Much Must Health Charities Disclose About Donors?"

In-class work on client project

## **Week 9**

March 20

### ***Communicating about Drugs and Medical Devices (Part I)***

Reading: Kolata, "Searching for Clarity: A Primer on Medical Studies"  
Harmon, "New Drugs Stir Debate on Basic Rules of Clinical Trials"  
Mandelbaum, "Hidden Side Effects: Medical Studies Often Leave Out Adverse Outcomes"  
Marcus, "Trials." Read or download at:  
[http://projects.wsj.com/trials\\_ebooks/TRIALS.pdf](http://projects.wsj.com/trials_ebooks/TRIALS.pdf)  
*The New York Times*, "The Mechanisms of a Controlled Trial"

In-class work on client project

## **Week 10**

March 27

### ***Communicating about Drugs and Medical Devices (Part II)***

Reading: Gann, "U.S. Has Drug Recall Problem, Study Says"  
Gerth & Miller, "Use Only as Directed." Read at:  
<http://www.propublica.org/article/tylenol-mcneil-fda-use-only-as-directed>  
Harris, "What's Behind an FDA Stamp?"  
LaMattina, "Maybe it's Time for Drug Companies to Drop TV Ads"  
Ruiz, "Ten Misleading Drug Ads"  
Singer, "In Recall, a Role Model Stumbles"

In-class work on client project

## **Week 11**

April 3

### ***Health Communication at Communication Agencies***

Reading: Fidelzeit, "Health Communication Roundtable: Under the Microscope"

In-class work on client project

## **Week 12**

April 10

### ***Communicating about Food and Supplements***

Reading: Associated Press, "'Food Police' go after Happy Meal Toys"  
Begley, "Food, Beverage Companies Slash Calories in Obesity Fight"  
Fletcher, Frisvold & Teft, "Taxing Soft Drinks and Restricting Access to Vending Machines to Curb Child Obesity"  
Hartocollis, "Calorie Postings Don't Change Habits, Study Finds"  
Ritchel, "In Online Games, a Path to Young Consumers"  
Rosenberg, "To Fight Obesity, a Carrot and a Stick"  
Severson, "Told to Eat its Vegetables, America Orders Fries"  
Singer, "Food with Benefits, or So They Say"  
Strom, "Lawyers from Suits against Big Tobacco Target Food Makers"

In-class work on client project

## **Week 13**

April 17

### ***Communicating about Food Safety***

Reading: Fox, "FDA's New Rules Aim for Clean Fruit, Veggies"  
Grady, "When Bad Things Come from 'Good' Food"  
Moss, "The Burger that Shattered her Life"  
Nixon, "Obama Proposes Single Overseer for Food Safety"  
Revkin, "Managing Risk in Booming Global Bazaar of Food and Drugs"  
Schlosser, "Unsafe at any Meal"  
Strom, "Social Media as a Megaphone to Pressure the Food Industry"

In-class work on client project

## **Week 14**

April 24

### ***Predicting and Managing Health Risks, Issues and Crises***

Reading: Fink, "The Deadly Choices at Memorial"  
McKenna, "Imagining the Post-Antibiotic Future." Read at:  
<https://medium.com/p/892b57499e77>

Sack, Fink, Belluck & Nossiter, "How Ebola Roared Back." For maps and videos: <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/30/health/how-ebola-roared-back.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&module=second-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&r=0>

*USA Today*, "A Year Later, 5 Lessons from Swine Flu Outbreak"

Presentations to client (two hard copies of campaign communication plan and materials and one electronic copy – on flash drive or CD – due in class).

**FINAL EXAM:** Mon. May 1, 4:15 p.m.