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COMX 480.01: Health Communication

Heather L.L. Voorhees

University of Montana, Missoula, heather.voorhees@umontana.edu

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COMX 480: Health Communication

Spring 2022

- Professor:** Heather Voorhees, Ph.D.
E-mail: heather.voorhees@mso.umt.edu
- Class meetings:** M, W, F 9-9:50 a.m.
Room: LA 338
- Office hours:** Mondays and Wednesdays, 10-11 a.m.
LA 356
- Required texts:** du Pré, A. (2020). *Communicating about Health: Current Issues and Perspectives* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press
**Required additional/replacement readings will be available on Moodle. I may also assign more/less reading as the course continues to enhance your learning.*

Course Description & Objectives

“Health” and “communication” are both large, all-encompassing concepts – so, what do we mean when we talk about “health communication?” Communication, both verbal and non-verbal, about well-being and illness happens all around us, in many different forms. Through readings, lectures, discussion, assignments, and experiential activities, COMX 480 will explore the theory, research, and skills associated with communicating in various health-related contexts. This will include communication among and between patients, providers, family caregivers, healthcare organizations, communities, and in mediated messages in the marketing and promotion of health information and the politics of health care. We will examine the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and intergroup aspects of health so that you may become more mindful, educated, and effective health communicators.

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

- explain why health communication is important and how it influences (and is influenced by) multiple levels of human behavior.
- explain how the health-related communication of patients, healthcare providers, and family caregivers inform, differ from, and intersect with one another.
- analyze and describe how social, political, and cultural factors affect health communication and healthcare.
- 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
- effectively work with others on a multiple-member team to complete a final project, which includes practicing team conflict management skills.
- practice clear, concise, and effective writing.

How This Course Works

Each week, you will be responsible for:

1. attending class Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (unless otherwise noted).
2. reading a chapter in your textbook, and possibly an extra reading.
3. finishing a five-question content quiz.
4. Occasionally, you will **also** complete a short (5-point) assignment that relates to that week's lecture content, including short reflection essays, podcast reviews, and/or small-group forum discussions.

When are assignments due?

All assignments are due in Moodle by noon on the Sunday of that week. (For example, assignments given during the week of Jan. 19-22 will be due by noon Sunday, Jan. 23).

What if I forget to do an assignment (late work policy)?

Weekly quizzes, assignments and activities, as well as Application Activities, will be accepted for up to one day after the posted deadline, but you will lose 20% of total points possible. You will NOT be allowed to take exams after the posted deadline.

How can I succeed in this class?

If you're looking to perform well in Health Communication, I recommend that you:

- **DO THE WORK.** Seriously. The students who scramble for points in Week 14 are *always* those who neglect assignments Weeks 1-10. You simply cannot make up for lost time, so it is crucial that you turn your work in on time.
- **Schedule** a specific, consistent weekly time to do your homework, including taking your weekly content quiz.
- **Hold yourself accountable**, and be responsible for doing the homework and turning things in on time.
- **Learn** how to navigate Moodle. Do you know how to find assigned readings? Do you know how to log into a class seminar?
- **Ask for help** early and often if you are confused about anything or can't find a resource.
- **Make the effort** to get to know your classmates as much as you can, via classes and online small-group activities.

Classroom Etiquette

In health communication, we often discuss materials that are sensitive (or even taboo): reproductive and sexual health, eating disorders, mental health, dying, etc. I ask that you respect others' experiences while also exploring your own. Also, I encourage you to ask questions (even tough ones that I may not know the answer to). I will do the same. Let's all strive to be honest, respectful, and curious. Please talk to me in class or individually if you have any questions or concerns with this class or specific weekly topics.

Grading

Your final grade will be based on attendance and engagement, two exams, in-class activities, and a final health communication campaign team assignment. The grading breakdown is as follows:

Assignment

Total Points Possible



Weekly Content Quizzes & Activities	100 points
Application Activities	60 points (3 activities, 20 points each)
Exam 1	50 points
Exam 2	50 points
Final Project (Health Campaign)	65 points
TOTAL	325 points

Grades will be based on the following scale:

A+	97-100%	B-	80-82%	D	63-66%
A	93-96%	C+	77-79%	D-	60-62%
A-	90-92%	C	73-76%	F	59% and below
B+	87-89%	C-	70-72%		
B	83-86%	D+	67-69%		

Assignment/Exam Description

ALL QUIZZES AND ACTIVITIES ARE DUE BY NOON SUNDAY. For example, the class assignments given during the week of Monday, Jan. 17- Friday, Jan 21 are due by noon Sunday, Jan. 23. Assignments will be accepted up to 24 hours past the deadline, for a 20% deduction.

Weekly Content Quizzes

Each week, you will finish a 5-point quiz (via Moodle) that covers major concepts from the book chapter and our class lectures. There will be 13 quizzes, but your lowest score will be dropped at the end of the semester.

Weekly Activities

Eight times throughout the semester, you will complete a short activity that allows you to engage with one of the concepts we cover that week. For example, you may be asked to listen to a podcast and write a short reflection essay about it. These are 5-point activities, due at the same time as your content quizzes (i.e. noon on Sundays).

Application Activities

Three times throughout the semester, we will participate in Application Activities, which are more extensive than the weekly lecture or reading engagement assignments. You will either work together with a small group or work independently. You will get a full week to complete each Application Activity, and will get one day off of class to allow time to complete it.

Exams

There will be two exams testing your knowledge of health communication concepts. The two exams (mid-term/final) will be comprised of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. I will conduct exam review sessions and hand out review worksheets to assist you in preparing for each exam. The final exam will only cover material that wasn't on the first exam (thus, it is not cumulative).

Final Project

Working in a small group, you will create a Health Communication Campaign/Intervention that addresses a specific health issue and translates basic research (use journal articles as your foundation, incl. the articles read for class, if you want) to a specific audience. This project will



consist of a team paper and an in-class presentation. Individual students may earn extra or lose points based on their group participation or lack thereof. *An assignment sheet with specific details will follow.*

Extra Credit

Beyond a few “extra” questions on exams, **no extra credit** will be offered in this class.

Expectations for Assignments

Writing Quality

All papers are expected to reflect university-level writing quality: spelling, organizational, and grammatical errors will greatly reduce your final grade. The University’s Writing and Public Speaking Center offers one-on-one assistance with written assignments and oral presentations, available on a drop-in or by-appointment basis. They can provide feedback on written assignments, as well as help develop strategies for re-writes. Information on these services can be found at www.umt.edu/writingcenter/.

Academic Integrity

As a student of the University of Montana, you must practice academic honesty and are bound by the following Code of Academic Conduct: <http://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards/student-code-of-conduct-2020-pdf>. Academic misconduct includes:

- Plagiarism (see below)
- Misconduct during an examination or academic exercise
- Unauthorized possession of examination or other course materials
- Tampering with course materials
- Submitting false information
- Submitting work previously presented in another course
- Improperly influencing conduct, such as influencing an instructor to unfairly change your grade
- Substituting for another student during an examination
- Facilitating academic dishonesty, or knowingly helping another person commit academic dishonesty

What is plagiarism?

All course work should be original and unique for this class (i.e., do not use work from other courses even if it is your own). Plagiarism is defined as quoting or paraphrasing from other sources without acknowledging/citing the source of your information, or presenting quoted material as your own words.

Examples of plagiarism include:

- Cutting-and-pasting material, or paraphrasing ideas, from an academic source without properly citing it
- Using portions of something you wrote in a previous class in an assignment in this course (yep, you can plagiarize yourself!)



- Reviewing a friend's assignment, then using a couple sentences of hers in your own assignment
- Purchasing essays from an online service (if someone else wrote it, but your name is on it, it's plagiarism, PLAIN AND SIMPLE).

Plagiarism results in, at minimum, failure on the assignment, but can result in failure of the course and reporting to academic authorities at the university. 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 consult a style manual guide, such as <https://owl.purdue.edu/>. Not knowing the definition of plagiarism does not excuse you from the consequences.

Breaking the Student Code of Conduct

If I suspect you of breaking the Student Code of Academic Conduct in any way, I will first request a private conversation with you to discuss the issue. If, after that meeting, I still have suspicions and/or proof of inappropriate behavior, I will report the matter to the department chair and/or the college dean. From there, the dean's office will open an investigation, during which you are entitled to dispute the claim and appeal any decision made in your case. Please review the [U of Montana Student Code of Conduct](https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards) for more details (<https://www.umt.edu/student-affairs/community-standards>).

Consequences for breaking the Code of Academic Conduct can include, but is not limited to: failing the assignment; failing the course; suspension or expulsion from the University; or the University's refusal to grant a degree.

Student Rights, Resources, and Expectations

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

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 Montana 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 Disability Services for Students, at dss@umontana.edu or (406) 243-2243.

COVID-related rules

We are living in interesting times, and a global pandemic requires special rules. Please make special note of the following requirements:

- We all follow U of Montana's guidelines on social distancing and mask wearing. If you choose not to wear a mask during class, I will choose to ask you to leave, forfeiting any activity or participation points for that day.
- If you are feeling ill, contact the Curry Health Center at (406) 243-4330 to report your symptoms.
- If your illness causes you to fall behind in coursework, contact me directly ASAP to discuss. We can work together to figure out a modified plan for you. Just like for any



medical issue, you will need to provide evidence that you sought medical help and were assessed by a licensed doctor.

- Up-to-Date COVID-19 Information from the University of Montana is available at the UM Coronavirus Website: <https://www.umt.edu/coronavirus>

Student Resources:

Any student who faces challenges securing food, housing, or health care and believes that this could affect their performance in this course, is urged to contact any or all of the following campus resources:

- Food Pantry Program. UM offers a food pantry that students can access for emergency food. The pantry is open on Tuesdays from 9 to 2, on Fridays from 10-5. The pantry is located in UC 119 (in the former ASUM Childcare offices). For more information about this program, email umpantry@mso.umt.edu, visit the pantry's website (<https://www.umt.edu/uc/food-pantry/default.php>).
- ASUM Renter Center. The Renter Center has compiled a list of resources for UM students at risk of homelessness or food insecurity here: <https://medium.com/griz-renter-blog>. Students can schedule an appointment with Renter Center staff to discuss their situation and receive information, support, and referrals.
- TRiO Student Support Services. TRiO serves UM students who are low-income, first-generation college students, or have documented disabilities. TRiO services include a textbook loan program, scholarships and financial aid help, academic advising, coaching, and tutoring. Students can check their eligibility for TRiO services online here: <http://www.umt.edu/trioss/apply.php#Eligibility>.
- Curry Health Center: Curry Health Center provides quality, affordable dental, medical and mental health care for students at the University of Montana. They offer appointments and online screening tools, and same-day appointments if needed: <http://www.umt.edu/curry-health-center/>.

If you are comfortable, please contact me with concerns you have and I will do my best to help connect you with additional resources.