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## **CMST 4112 Health Communication**

Communication Studies 4112

MWF 9:30-10:20

204 Coates Hall

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Instructor: Dr. Loretta L. Pecchioni  
Office: 124 Coates Hall  
Office Hours: Monday, Wednesday and Friday 9:00 – 9:30 a.m., 10:30 – 11:00 a.m., and by appointment  
Phone: 578-6724 or call the department office 578-4172  
E-mail: lpecch1@lsu.edu

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Required Text: du Pre, A. (2010). *Communicating about health: Current issues and perspectives, 4<sup>th</sup> edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.

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### **Course Objectives**

Think of this course as a capstone experience in which you have the opportunity to combine your skills, knowledge, and experience regarding communication to an applied setting that cuts across the range of communicative situations. Drawing on those abilities, this class provides you with a foundation of health-related terms and concepts in order to apply effective communication skills and to critique various aspects of communication practices in formal and informal health care settings.

The course objectives are to provide students with an:

1. overview of current research and issues related to communication in health care contexts
  2. opportunity to apply their communicative knowledge to pragmatic problems in the health care industry, ranging from intra- and interpersonal to mass mediated situations
  3. opportunity to examine their own role in health care encounters
  4. opportunity to enhance group collaboration skills
  5. opportunity to enhance critical thinking skills
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January 25	Chapter 7: Cultural Conceptions of Health and Illness
January 27	Chapter 11: Health Images in the Media
January 29	<i>Health images exercise</i>
February 1	Chapter 6: Diversity in Health Care
February 3	Culture and Health Communication summary and synthesis
February 5	<b>Exam 1 – chapters 1, 2, 7, 11, and 6</b>
February 8	Mardi Gras break – no class
February 10	Mardi Gras break – no class
February 12	Overview of Caregiving Issues
February 15	Chapter 3: Patient-Caregiver Communication
February 17	Chapter 5: Caregiver Perspective
February 19	<i>Interdisciplinary team exercise</i> <i>“rolling” final question 1 response due</i>
February 22	Chapter 4: Patient Perspective
February 24	Chapter 8: Social Support, Family Caregiving, and End of Life
February 26	Chapter 8 (continued)
February 29	<i>family caregiving case study</i>
March 2	Chapter 9: eHealth, mHealth, and Telemedicine
March 4	group work day for eHealth exercise
March 7	group work day for eHealth exercise <i>“rolling” final question 2 response due</i>
March 9	<i>eHealth presentations</i>
March 11	<i>eHealth presentations</i>
March 14	<i>eHealth presentations</i>
March 16	Caregiving and Health Communication summary and synthesis
March 18	<b>Exam 2 – chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9</b>
March 21	Spring Break – no class
March 23	Spring Break – no class
March 25	Spring Break – no class
March 28	Health Care Organizations and Public Health overview
March 30	Chapter 12: Public Health Crises and Health Care Reform
April 1	<i>Risk communication exercise</i>
April 4	Chapter 10: Health Care Administration, Human Resources, Marketing, and PR
April 6	health promotion campaigns – overview <i>career exercise due</i>

April 8	Chapter 13: Planning Health Promotion Campaigns
April 11	Chapter 14: Designing and Implementing Health Campaigns
April 13	group work day for health promotion campaigns exercise <i>“rolling” final question 3 response due</i>
April 15	group work day for health promotion campaigns exercise
April 18	<i>health campaigns presentations</i>
April 20	<i>health campaigns presentations</i>
April 22	<i>health campaigns presentations</i>
April 25	Health Care Organizations and Public Health summary and synthesis
April 27	<b>Exam 3 – chapters 12, 10, 13, and 14</b>
April 29	review for final <i>Last day to turn in papers on counselor in training exercise</i>
May 4	<b>Final</b>
Wednesday	3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

## Course Assignments

**Exams. Purpose.** The exams will test the knowledge you have gained in each section of the course and will help you to stay current with the assigned readings and topics discussed in class. **Format.** The 3 exams will consist of multiple choice questions and short answer questions. The multiple choice questions (worth 2 points each) will cover basic concepts in the text. The short answer questions (worth 5 points each) will primarily be drawn from the questions at the end of each chapter. Because of the number of potential concepts and questions in each chapter as well as additional material covered in class, the study guide posted on Moodle will help you focus on the issues I find most important. Coverage for each exam is noted in the class schedule.

**Final. Purpose.** The comprehensive final is designed to allow you to demonstrate your ability to analyze and synthesize communicative processes in relation to the course material. **Format.** The comprehensive final is all essay questions. Because students often find it challenging to know what criteria I apply for evaluating these types of responses, we will have a “rolling” portion to the final. That is, 3 questions that will count as part of the final will be due at intermittent points during the semester (see the course schedule). Essentially, this portion of the final is take home. I will post the question on Moodle 1 week before it is due. After submission, I will provide you with a grade and feedback so that you will be able to better hone your responses across the course of the semester. The standard portion of the final will occur during our regularly scheduled final exam time. I will provide you with a set of potential questions the week before the final so that you have time to consider strategies for responding to these questions. All of these questions will focus on analysis, that is, application of the knowledge and/or critique of the choices made in the identified examples.

**Counselor Training.** *Purpose.* Learning to help others set goals and make decisions takes practice. You will be paired with a counselor in training to help them develop their skills. By reflecting on your experiences and applying concepts from our class to those experiences, you should gain additional insight into the challenges of helping others as well as how you enact your role as someone receiving help. *Format—Sessions.* You will need to meet TWICE with your “counselor” during back to back weeks (e.g., session one will be one week and session 2 will be the following week). The first session is about 15 minutes, the second one is about 20 minutes minimum (never more than 30 minutes). For the session, you should be prepared to discuss a problem you need to solve or a decision you need to make. This issue is not one for which you might need to seek mental health counseling nor is it a replacement for mental health counseling. The student “counselor” will contact you by e-mail to set up a session time that works with your schedules and to give you specific instructions. If you should need to reschedule due to an emergency, please work out those details with the counselor in training. These sessions will take place in 120 Peabody Hall. Because their grades are heavily dependent on your attendance, so will your grade. You will receive 25 points for each session that you attend.

Because there are 10 counselors in training and 30 students enrolled in our class, you will be divided into three groups. Each counselor will end up working with three students from our class. The due dates for their assignments mean that we should conclude our portion of the work before those dates. Their due dates are as follows:

Group 1: 2/22, 2/29

Group 2: 4/4, 4/11

Group 3: 4/25, 5/2

Therefore, you will be meeting with your counselor before each of these dates, depending on which group includes you. We will select these groups in class.

*Format—Papers.* You will be expected to write two papers reflecting on your experiences and applying class concepts. Both papers should be typed, 3-5 pages in length, and double spaced. One paper should examine communication style(s) exhibited by both the counselor in training and yourself. See chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the text for the relevant terms. You should be able to not only describe these styles, but also assess what you think was more or less effective use. One paper should apply one or more theories/concepts about behavior change, reflecting on how difficult it is to help people work through setting goals and making decisions. See chapters 13 and 14 for the relevant information. You may submit your papers at any time after your sessions, however, you may want to wait until after we have covered the relevant material in class.

**Individual exercises.** *Purpose.* The individual assignments will provide you with the opportunity to explore your role(s) with regards to health and communication – focusing on your personal experiences and potential careers. *Format.* Different exercises will take different formats, but primarily you will be working on them during the identified class period.

- **Health in the News submission.** *Purpose.* This exercise asks you to find an article or video about health in the news so that you begin to “see” how common this topic is across a wide range of media formats. We will view and discuss several of these submissions in class to see what is “out there” and what topics the class members found intriguing. *Format.* You will electronically submit the link to a relevant article or video. Grading will reflect whether you made the submission on time.

- **Health Images.** *Purpose.* This exercise is designed to help us to begin to see how popular culture reflects and shapes attitudes toward health and illness. *Format.* We will identify a number of such images and discuss them in small groups. The groups will report to the whole class their responses. Grading will reflect your participation in group during the discussion period.
  - **Interdisciplinary Teams in Health Organizations.** *Purpose.* This exercise helps you to experience the process of convening an interdisciplinary team and developing a plan in order to consider the differing roles of various health care providers and the patient. *Format.* Using a case study, the class will divide into small groups and members will be assigned roles within the team and provided information relevant to their role. Each group will develop a care plan and then share their plan with the whole class. Grading will reflect your participation in group during the discussion period.
  - **Family Caregiving Case Study.** *Purpose.* This case study exercise provides you with an opportunity to explore various interpersonal communication theories and apply them to an on-going family care situation. *Format.* The case study will be posted on Moodle for review before our class meeting. In class, you will divide into small groups and examine a section of the case study in depth. Each group will report to the class as a whole how the lessons learned in this particular situation might be useful in other health-related situations. Grading will reflect your participation in group during the discussion period.
  - **Risk Communication.** *Purpose.* One of the great challenges for health promotion is helping people to understand their risk for developing a disease, being in an accident, or, well, the list goes on and on. This exercise is designed to help you understand the nuances of risk communication. *Format.* We will identify several approaches to risk communication. In small groups, we will examine them in detail and then share the lessons to be learned about effectively appreciating risk. Grading will reflect your participation during the discussion period.
1. **Careers.** *Purpose.* Students graduating with degrees in communication do not always understand their potential career options. The health field is one with growing job opportunities. This exercise will provide you will the chance to consider potential careers, or to eliminate some options. *Format.* Throughout the textbook, you will notice information about potential careers in the health care field. You will write a short paper identifying at least two careers you find intriguing and identify your knowledge, skills and abilities that seem relevant to each one. You may want to do a little research before deciding on which careers you want to include in your paper. Grading will reflect your engagement with the topic.

**Group exercises.** *Purpose.* These group exercises will give you the opportunity to “unpack” health messages and evaluate the credibility of different sources of health-related information. *Format.* For both exercises, you will select groups based on shared interests in the topic. The group will collect and evaluate information, then present to the class their findings. Grading will reflect your participation in the group (based on peer evaluations) and on your presentation to the class (based on audience evaluations).

- **eHealth and Health Literacy.** Many students report to me that because they are taking this class, they are asked by family members to help them search for information related to symptoms being experienced, a diagnosis that has been received, treatment options, etc. As a class we will select 5 or 6 topics and divide into groups – one for each topic.

The group will search for information related to the topic and report to the class the range of sources, evaluations of source credibility, and concerns about access, readability, value of information, etc. A more detailed set of potential questions to address will be provided. Once the group has explored the topic, they will present their findings to the class. Each group will have 15-20 minutes for their presentation.

- ***Health Promotion Campaigns.*** These campaigns are one of the main ways through which people learn about diseases, risks, healthy behaviors, etc. As a class we will select 5 or 6 topics and divide into groups – one for each topic. The group will review the related health campaign and report to the class about its effectiveness in reaching its target audience, an evaluation of source credibility, and concerns about potential misunderstandings, etc. A more detailed set of potential questions to address will be provided. Once the group has explored the materials related to the health campaign, they will present their findings to the class. Each group will have 15-20 minutes for their presentation.

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## **Deadlines**

If you know that you will be absent on the day that an assignment is due, you may hand the assignment in early or send it electronically by the deadline. If you fail to turn in an assignment on time because of an emergency, you will need to provide proof of that emergency in order to have the assignment accepted. Assignments handed in late will be penalized 10% for each late class period, except in documented cases of emergency. Late assignments will not be accepted more than 2 weeks after the initial deadline.

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## **Reasonable Accommodation**

The Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973: If you have a disability that impacts your work in this class and for which you may require accommodation, please see a Coordinator in the Office for Disability Affairs (112 Johnston Hall). After you receive your accommodations letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.