

**Communication 355: Health Communication**  
**Spring 2015**  
**Dr. E. Spradley**  
**Stephen F. Austin State University**

**TEXTBOOK:**

Du Pre, A. (2009). *Communicating about health: Current issues and perspectives*. Oxford University Press.

**COURSE OVERVIEW, OBJECTIVES, AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

This course provides an overview of the field of health communication with attention to analysis and practice of health communication relationships and messages. Health Communication focuses on patient-provider communication, healthcare systems, culture of medicine, caregiving, end of life communication, medical decision making, health promotion and behavior change campaigns, worksite health promotion, health narratives, telemedicine, computer-mediated social support, health information seeking, and health entertainment and popular culture. The focus is on understanding how a constitutive model of communication informs the study and understanding of the aforementioned health issues.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Understand how health is socially constructed.
2. Understand and critically evaluate the culture of medicine and the biomedical model in comparison to biopsychosocial and cultural models.
3. Understand and critically evaluate how technology, culture, and body politics (i.e. gendered bodies, stigma) affect such issues as doctor-patient relationships, health information seeking, social support, and health promotion.
4. Understand how to design and evaluate effective health promotion materials in terms of campaigns and worksite health promotion.
5. Understand how to design communication competency interventions for healthcare providers and patients differently to promote collaborative care.
6. Understand how health narratives function for teller and audience.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**Three Tests:** Tests are available for 24 hours (12 am – 11:59 pm) on the specified day. Tests are primarily essay and customized to the student's activities/assignments. You must answer a question to go to the next question. You may NOT go back to questions or change answers. Once beginning the test, you must finish the test. You may only take the test once. (200 points each)

**Health Communication Service/Volunteering & Essay:** Students will select a health organization to volunteer with for 5 hours over the semester. A supervisor will need to fill out a form consenting to your volunteer time and briefly describing what you will do during the time.

At the end of the volunteer time, your supervisor will need to sign off that the hours were completed. **The signed form and 1-2 page, APA style essay about your experience is due on** Options include but are not limited to: WIC, Community RX, Health Horizons, Hospice of East Texas, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council of East Texas (ADAC), local hospital, Blood Center. (50 points)

**Health Communication Project:** Students have a choice as to what they want to do for their semester project. Each student needs to visit with the instructor to be approved prior to mid-February. Your instructor wants to help you collect research over the topic, develop ideas more fully, and organize the paper. Ideas for the semester project are: (a total of 350 points)

- Select a health issue, topic, or concern to collect data (i.e. focus group, in-depth interviews, participant observation, or surveys) and analyze. Work with your instructor to comply with ethical guidelines for conducting research with human subjects. Work with your instructor to get sources to help you explain your data collection and analysis methods because this course does not cover data collection and analysis methods in-depth.
- Propose a health communication skills intervention specifying the target audience, the focal communication competencies, the communication context, strategies for skill building, and evaluation. Remember that skills interventions should be theoretically driven; therefore, behavior change and interpersonal theories should be used to rationalize choices. Course readings and additional readings must be used to justify the skills intervention, the selected context, and the skill building exercises.
- Write an autoethnographic health narrative using theory and health communication literature to provide insights through the health narrative on topics such as social support, the culture of medicine, healthcare relationships, health disparities, stigma, etc... The health narrative should be no more than 40% of the typed semester project. This is an application of crystallization, and you will need to work with your instructor to layer in analysis of the health narrative. Course readings and additional readings must be cited in analysis of narrative.
- Analyze popular culture entertainment such as a primetime health drama or a movie about a health issue using course concepts and theories to explain themes, analyze and critique the work in terms of gender/culture/other, and draw conclusions about its contributions to public discourse on health.
- Propose a health communication campaign specifying how formative research, audience segmentation, message construction, media, strategy, and evaluation will be conducted/selected. This may be in the context of a worksite, state campaign, or national campaign. Remember that campaigns should be theoretically driven; therefore, behavior change theories should be used to explain choices. Course readings and additional readings must be used to justify choices. Sample copy of messages must be provided in the project.
- Conduct interviews and/or focus groups over a health issue to better understand people's experiences and, then, systematically analyze the data using a method such as grounded theory (thematic analysis).

- Analyze a health communication campaign based on theory and effective strategies learned in the course through assigned readings and additional research.
- Other ideas for the semester project may be presented in person to your instructor. Your instructor has full discretion to approve or disapprove a semester project.

All paper topics must be submitted as typed paragraphs.

**APA Style Reference Page due in class:** Submit an APA style reference page with 10 citations of relevant journal articles and/or books. Your professor will help you find good quality sources. Make an appointment to meet with her in advance. Each APA error will result in a 1-point deduction from the 50 point assignment. Each citation is worth up to 5 points. See the calendar. (50 points)

**Paper Outline due in class:** Submit a typed outline of the paper. The outline is NOT key words. The outline should use complete sentences, use parenthetical citations, include all major parts and ideas of the paper development, and have a reference page (corrected reference page). See the calendar. (50 points)

**Paper due in class:** The approved semester project will be typed in a 10-page document (formatting: 12 point font, 1 inch margins, no headings, page numbers, APA style cover sheet, abstract, and reference page not counting toward 10 required pages). Course readings should be cited in the paper, but students should include research that they have individually conducted. A total of 8 sources including books, journal articles, and chapters from an edited volume must be cited at minimum. (250 points)

Regardless of topic, the paper should contain: clear description of paper's purpose and organization, thesis sentence, rationalization for study/analysis, defining of key terms and literature within health communication, analysis section, and conclusions that indicate implications for health communication.

Grading will be comprised of: 20% grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, clarity, and writing style; 20% use of course content cited and used appropriately; 20% additional health communication research cited and used appropriately; 40% clarity and support of arguments and use of terms and scholars work accurately.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

**Week 1** Course Introduction. Discussion question: Is being healthy simply the absence of disease?

Read du Pre chapter 1. Be able to define communication and health.

**Week 2** Read Chapter 1 from Maastricht University's School of Health Professions Education text titled, *Challenging the patient-centered paradigm: Designing feasible guidelines for doctor patient communication* (available on D2L).

Read du Pre chapter 2 on the history of health and current issues. How are current health issues or practices going to affect the future of health communication?

D2L Application Activity (online class)

Read du Pre chapter 3 on patient-caregiver communication.

**Week 3** Read Haidet (2007) and Street (available on D2L). Discussion will center on communication competency interventions to develop empowering skills for patients and caregivers.

**Week 4** Read du Pre chapter 4 on the caregiver perspective. Discussion will center on caregiving relationships like parent-child and adult child-elderly parent. We will discuss gender and emotion in caregiving.

**Week 5** Read du Pre chapter 5 on the patient perspective. Prior to class, you will need to read/watch blog posts that reveal health narratives. Your instructor will direct you to websites. We will discuss next class time.

Read Spradley (available on D2L). We will discuss narratives, their function, and patient identity.

**Health Communication Project topics are due. Type up a paragraph describing your interests and ideas to submit to your instructor at the beginning of class.**

**Week 6** Read Teal and Street (2008) (available on D2L).

Read du Pre chapter 6 on diversity among patients. We will discuss race, socio-economic status, health literacy, disparities, gender, sexual orientation, and disabilities. You will be assigned a diversity topic and need to find an academic journal article studying the topic and a popular press article reporting on the topic. You will be accountable for having read them, answered the assigned discussion questions over them, and report to the class.

We will discuss the results of the activity.

**Week 7** Finalize discussion of key concepts, terms, and studies related to Test 1 content.

**Test 1: Exam (must take during the 24-hour period on D2L – your responsibility)**

**Week 8**

Read Braithwaite et al. (1999) (available on D2L).

Read du Pre chapter 7 on social support and health information seeking. We will do an exercise to engage in health information seeking and participate in a computer-mediated social support network related to the health concern.

Read du Pre chapter 8 on cultural conceptions of health and illness. We will discuss Complimentary and Alternative Medicine practices, culture, and other related issues.

**Week 9** Read Yeshua-Katz and Martins (2012) (available on D2L). We will discuss stigma and online social support as a way to bridge together several topics.

Read du Pre chapter 9 on culture and diversity in healthcare organizations.

**Week 10** Read du Pre chapter 10 on leadership and teamwork in healthcare organizations.

**Week 11 Test 2: Exam (must take during the 24-hour period on D2L – your responsibility)**

### **Semester Project Reference List Due In Class**

Introduction to Health Communication Campaigns and Worksite Health Promotion (no readings)

**Week 12** Read du Pre chapter 13 on planning a health campaign.

**Health Communication Service/Volunteering Hours & Essay are due at the beginning of class. We will discuss the experience and career opportunities in health communication.**

### **Week 13 Semester Project Detailed Outline Due in Class**

Read du Pre chapter 14 on designing and implementing health campaigns.

Read du Pre chapter 11 on health images in the media. We will discuss entertainment health education.

**Week 14** Read du Pre chapter 12 on public health crises and health care reform. We will discuss H1N1 and AIDS in depth.

Discussion: Telemedicine

**Week 15 Presentations (Paper due in class.)**

**Week 16 Test 3: Final Exam (must take during the 24-hour period on D2L – your responsibility)**