

Utah State University  
Department of Languages, Philosophy and Communication Studies  
**COMST 3700: Health Communication**

Spring, 2016  
Monday, Wednesday, and Friday  
9:30 a.m. – 10:20 a.m.  
Location: Old Main 301

**Instructor: Dr. Kristina M. Scharp**

Office location: MAIN 069B  
Office hours: Wednesdays 10:20-12:20 and by appointment  
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**Course Description & Goals**

**Importance of Learning About Health Communication:** There is a growing awareness that communication is inextricably intertwined with issues of health and medicine. This is true on a personal, intimate level in the way patients and caregivers interact in the examination and hospital room. It is also true at an organizational level considering policies and community relations affect the way that health care is provided and the way that people feel about providers. Finally, it is also apparent that media campaigns that seek to educate people about health. At every level, the importance of health communication is extraordinary, but so are the challenges.

**Professions Requiring Health Communication Skills:** People who understand communication are in an important position to help; and their services are increasingly in demand. Health communication specialists work (1) professional caregivers, (2) in hospital education departments to teach medical professionals to communicate more effectively, (3) in public relations, marketing, and in human resources departments, (4) in patient satisfaction and patient advocacy programs, (5) in health care administration, (6) in media organizations covering health issues, (7) in non-profit organizations, and (8) in organizations that educate the public and support public policy and research.

**This Course:** The majority of our meetings will emphasize the **knowledge component** which will emphasize key terminology and health communication theories. We will engage these concepts through the use of videos, during lectures, in discussion, and by interacting with guest speakers. We will also be putting our knowledge to use but engaging in a research study about undergraduate student parents; this is the **application component** of this course.

Specific goals of the course include:

- Gaining factual knowledge (key terminology in health communication)
- Learning fundamental principles and health communication theories
- Learning to apply course materials to in designing and implementing a research study

## Required Texts

The following required text can be purchased in the University Bookstore:

Du Pre, A. (2014). *Communicating about health: Current issues and perspectives*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Sanders, M. (2012) *Becoming a learner: Realizing the opportunity of education*. Hyde Park, UT: Institute for Communication & Leadership. ISBN-13: 978-1-4675-3634-9

**The most important thing I can stress is that I am here to help you. I want you to succeed, be engaged with the course material, and look forward to coming to class. Please let me know how I can make this happen.**

## Course Evaluation

Typically, I do not change grades unless there is a mathematical error. If you have a concern, please be sure to contact me within seven days of receiving your grade but not sooner than 24 hours. My reasoning is that applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student.

Points will be distributed as follows:

- **Class Attendance/Participation: 50 points**
- **Exams: 150 points**
  - **Exam I: 60 points**
  - **Exam II: 40 points**
  - **Exam II: 50 points**
- **Questions and Reflections: 50 points (10 points each)**
- **Research Project – 250 points**
  - **Proposal and Outline – 50 points**
  - **Review of Literature – 50 points**
  - **Method – 50 points**
  - **Results – 50 points**
  - **Discussion – 50 points**
- **Application Paper – 25 points**
- **Group Assessment – 25 points**
- **Final Presentation: 50 points**
  - **Total: 600 points**

## Grading Scale

A	94-100	B-	80-83	D+	68-69
A-	90-93	C+	78-79	D	64-67
B+	88-89	C	74-77	D-	60-63
B	84-87	C-	70-73	F	<60

**Attendance/Participation:** Come to class having completed assigned readings. I will take attendance at the beginning of every class period. Students will accumulate two points for every day they attend class and actively participate in class.

Students are allowed **two absences** (TOTAL) over the course of this semester. In other words, I do not make the distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences. Save these absences for situations when you NEED them. If you are absent, you obviously cannot participate and so you will not receive that day’s participation points. After you use up your free absences, I will deduct **ten points per absence** from your overall grade. Don’t take a few days off for no reason – you might find that you need them later for an illness or family emergency. (Day One is Exempt)

**Exams:** Exams will be based on the readings and class discussions (anything we discuss is fair game.) Questions will be multiple choice and the exams are NOT cumulative. Exams cannot be made up or taken early (unless the circumstance is dire). Please note that the exams are heavily based on the textbook, failure to read will be problematic.

**Questions and Reflections:** On the day a Q&R is due, I expect you to show up to class with two formally articulated questions about the reading you would like to discuss during the class period - something that you found stimulating, interesting, provocative, irritating, etc. Try to steer clear from definitional questions or questions unrelated to the reading. Instead, focus on critically interrogating the reading for discrepancies, things that don’t quite make sense, things the authors could do better, etc. \*If you are absent, then it will be impossible for you to participate - thus you will not receive points for this component – but you still can turn in your reflection into my mailbox before class to receive up-to half credit.

In addition, I would also like you to write a reflection about how the material you’ve read connects with something in your own life. Tell me a story, share a memory, or send me a link. I’d be really excited if you could connect the course concepts to the service component of this course. The point is for you to show me that you: (1) read the material, (2) can apply the material in a useful way, and (3) can explicitly articulate how the two relate. In other words, don’t just say that concept X made you think of time Y or song Z. In order to receive the total 5 points, you must provide me with details.

**Research Project and Final Presentation:** We will be conducting a full research project as a class (in teams) this semester on undergraduate student parents at USU. We will be presenting this research to University officials at the end of the semester. Please see the assignment on Canvas for details.

**Application Paper:** Unlike the research project, this essay is informal. Please choose one guest speaker and reflect on their presentation, what you learned, and how you might use what you learned in your life. Also, choose the concept we discussed in class that stood out to you the most and tell me how it applies (or will apply) to your life or the lives of those close to you.

**Group Assessment:** At the end of the semester I will administer a quiz for you to assess your teammates’ performance.

**\*All assignments are due before class turned in through HARD COPY. Emailed copies will not be accepted.**

## Course Policies

- **Assignment Due Dates:** Late work will **NOT** be accepted. Any work that is not turned in on time will result in a zero for that assignment. In certain instances that are unavoidable, students may request an alternative due date. This must be negotiated **BEFORE** the assignment is due.
- **Learning Environment:** The classroom should be an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their experiences. Thus, it is my expectation that students actively listen to their peers and respect their experiences. We learn about ourselves when we communicate with other responsibly and you can expect the same from me.
- **Grade Management:** I will provide grades as quickly as possible but it is your responsibility to keep track of your grades. No grades will be shared via e-mail.
- **Extra Credit:** It is possible (but not guaranteed) that an opportunity for extra credit might arise. This opportunity will be research-related. In the event you do not qualify for the study, another opportunity will be made available.
- **Academic Misconduct:** Plagiarism is not tolerated in any course. Students are required to complete their own work and give credit (both in writing and orally) to any source used in completing an assignment. All citations should be APA 6<sup>th</sup> edition style. Instances of academic misconduct will be reported to the University and I will determine appropriate sanctions.
- **Computer/Technology:** Technology can be a great asset to learning but research suggests that students who don't use laptops consistently outperform their peers. Thus, semester I am asking that you keep your laptops/iPads/other technology at home (or tucked away in your bags). Please take a minute to read this article for more explanation: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/30/this-year-im-resolving-to-ban-laptops-from-my-classroom/>
- **Students with Disabilities:** Any student in this course who has a disability that may prevent him/her from fully demonstrating his/her abilities should personally contact me at the beginning of the semester or as soon as possible so that necessary accommodations can be made. Students are responsible for contacting Disability Resource Center and filing all necessary paperwork so that the disability can be properly documented.
- **Authorship on Manuscripts Resulting from the Data Set:** After the semester is over, I plan to use that data to write journal articles about undergraduate student parents *independent* of your projects. If you are interested in joining me, please notify me to discuss the possibility of a collaboration. If you are interested in moving your group project forward we can also discuss that possibility. Please know that according to the ICMJE, you need to meet the following four criteria to be considered for authorship:
  - Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work **AND**
  - Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content, **AND**
  - Final approval of the version to be published, **AND**
  - Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved

## Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change if the demands of the course require it. Readings will be discussed the day they are listed. All assignments are due at the beginning of class.

Week	Session	Discussion Topic	Reading	Due
1	M - 01-11	Syllabus and Intro		
1	W - 01-13	Why is Health Communication Important?	Chapter 1	
1	F - 01-15	Research Project Introduction		Reflection I
2	M - 01-18	Martin Luther King Day		
2	W - 01-20	Sociohistorical Considerations	Chapter 2	
2	F - 01-22	Guest Speaker Jody Koenig Kellas	Article 1	Q&R II
3	M - 01-25	Public Considerations (HR Guest Speaker)	Chapter 12	
3	W - 01-27	CPM and Identifying Distress		
3	F - 01-29	Guest Speaker Nicole Vouvalis		Privacy Contract
4	M - 02-01	Social Considerations	Chapter 6	CITI Training
4	W - 02-03	Cultural Considerations	Chapter 7	
4	F - 02-05	Practice Conducting Interviews		
5	M - 02-08	Health Communication Exam I		
5	W - 02-10	Patient-Caregiver Communication	Chapter 3	Proposal & Outline
5	F - 02-12	Independent Data Collection		
6	M - 02-15	President's Day Break		
6	W - 02-17	Guest Speaker Elizabeth Dorrance Hall		
6	F - 02-19	Independent Data Collection		
7	M - 02-22	Patient Perspectives	Chapter 4	
7	W - 02-24	Guest Speaker Brittan Barker		
7	F - 02-26	Independent Data Transcription		Review of Lit
8	M - 02-29	Guest Speaker Physician Jim Davis	Chapter 5	
8	W - 03-02	Independent Data Transcription		
8	F - 03-04	How to Analyze Your Data	Article 2	Transcriptions
9	MWF 7-11	Spring Break		
10	M - 03-14	Independent Data Analysis		
10	W - 03-16	Guest Speaker Morgan Walton (Hospice)	Chapter 8	
10	F - 03-18	Independent Data Analysis		
11	M - 03-21	Health Communication Exam II		
11	W - 03-23	Health Images in the Media	Chapter 11	
11	F - 03-25	How to Verify Your Data/Write Discussion		Data Analysis
12	M - 03-28	Chronic Uncertainty and Health	Article 3	Q&R III
12	W - 03-30	Guest Speaker Lindsey Thomas	Article 4	Q&R IV
12	F - 04-01	Independent Data Verification		
13	M - 04-04	Health Campaigns	Chapter 13	Method
13	W - 04-06	Exposure and Humor in Message Sharing	Article 5	Q&R V
13	F - 04-08	Independent Group Project Day		
14	M - 04-11	Health Campaigns	Chapter 14	
14	W - 04-13	Guest Speaker Lori Andersen		Results
14	F - 04-15	Independent Group Project Day		
15	M - 04-18	Health Communication Exam II		
15	W/F - 20/22	Group Project Practice		Posters Due
16	M - 04-25	Poster Presentations from 5-8		
16	W - 04-27	Project Debrief		Group Assessment
16	F - 04-29	Reflecting on Health Communication		Application Paper