Comm 443: Communicating Health Messages and Medical Issues  
Fall, 2011

Monday and Wednesday, 10 am-11:50 am  
Professors Susan H. Evans and Peter Clarke  
Room ASC G34

Overview of the course.

The quality of people's physical and emotional well being and the delivery of health care depend on efficient and effective communication. This course will help you understand how communication--interpersonal, mass media, telecommunication, and built spaces--shapes the exchange of information, the formation of attitudes and beliefs, and people's health behavior. We welcome students from all majors.

We have designed readings, class sessions, and writing assignments to help you learn about:

I. The Social Context of Health Care: how doctor-patient communication influences the quality of care and patients' well being; ways people can mobilize family, friends, and the healthcare system more effectively to meet their medical needs.

II. Images of Health and Medicine in the Public Media: ways that news media cover health and medicine; the development and impact of dramatic entertainment series and movies; the roles of drama as a public educator; how health interests lobby the mass media to influence entertainment and news content.

III. Psychological Theories of Health Behavior: research about communication campaigns and applications to public health; some health campaigns aim to reduce risks of illness and avoidable accidents, while others help people cope with chronic conditions; health literacy; health campaigns in the Developing World.

IV. Case Studies of Health Interventions and Methods of Evaluation: examples will illustrate principles drawn from throughout the course by concentrating on two applications: a) reducing hunger and malnutrition in the U.S. while combating the epidemic of obesity and diabetes; and b) helping seniors (and others) plan the kind of critical care they want, if they lose the ability to communicate with medical providers.

V. Impact of the Internet and other Information Technologies on the Quality of Health Care: the strengths and liabilities of health websites; other uses of information technologies (ITs) in health care.

VI. How Built Spaces Shape Communication and People’s Health: we will explore two facets of this topic: a) ways that poor interior design of health facilities constrains communication and undermines health; and b) how your personal environment--rooms, buildings, and urban landscapes--affect your health and well being.
Course materials.

You should purchase two paperback books and a COURSE PACK; the latter is available from the instructors at cost. The books are available at the bookstore or from Internet vendors:


Study questions.

We will distribute a list of study questions that will help guide you through the reading material for each class session. These questions will be posted on Blackboard, which you access via the following website: http://blackboard.usc.edu. These questions will not cover all of the lecture material, however. The study questions will be very helpful in preparing for the in-class quizzes. You can find the study questions under the heading “Content.” Keep in mind that approximately half of the questions on the quizzes are based on lectures.

Assignments.

You will write nine short papers, take part in an in-class group project, and complete two in-class quizzes. We will distribute detailed instructions for each assignment. Writing assignments will be posted on Blackboard under the heading “Assignments.”

E-mail communication.

You should check your USC e-mail regularly, because that is the e-mail address that Blackboard and your instructors use when distributing messages about the class.

Evaluation of your work.

Work is due on the indicated dates. Late writing assignments will be eligible for half credit only. In-class quizzes will only be administered on the dates shown in the syllabus. You will need a documented medical situation in order to petition to make alternative arrangements for taking a quiz. In addition, you must communicate with instructors prior to a scheduled quiz that medical circumstances make it impossible for you to attend class that day.
**Attendance policy.**

Class attendance is vital, providing exposure to lecture materials, videos, and discussions prompted by students’ interests. Attendance will be taken. Each student is allowed two absences. After two absences, each missed class will result in the reduction of one point.

**Components of your grade are as follows:**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Point value</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 7</td>
<td>Writing assignment #1: Analysis of medical consultation (2 pages)</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 12</td>
<td>In-class quiz #1</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 19</td>
<td>Writing assignment #2: Journalism analysis (2 pages)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 26</td>
<td>Writing assignment #3: “Nurse Jackie” analysis (2 pages)</td>
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<td>October 10</td>
<td>In-class project</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>October 17</td>
<td>Writing assignment #4: Advertising analysis (3 pages)</td>
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<td>October 24</td>
<td>In-class quiz #2</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>November 9</td>
<td>Writing assignment #5: Focus group analysis (3 pages)</td>
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<td>November 14</td>
<td>Writing assignment #6: Nutrition and message-tailoring study questions (2-3 pages)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>November 21</td>
<td>Writing assignment #7: Web-site analysis (complete a grid)</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>November 30</td>
<td>Writing and photo assignment #8: Design of medical environments and my environment and health (eight photographs plus captions)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 12</td>
<td>Final Paper: Synthesis (2 pages)</td>
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**Total** | **100 pts.**

We do not grade on a curve, so you are not competing with your classmates. Instead, you will gain by working together and sharing ideas and readings. Nonetheless, we expect papers and exams to be your own work. Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonestly will not be tolerated, and will be referred to the University's processes for hearings and discipline.
Here is how we will assign grades:

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<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>78-89</td>
<td>B</td>
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<tr>
<td>66-77</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>54-65</td>
<td>D</td>
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<td>0-53</td>
<td>F</td>
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The instructors may assign a plus or a minus based on class participation.

**Academic Integrity Statement.**

We are committed to upholding the University's Academic Integrity code as detailed in the SCampus Guide. It is the policy of the Annenberg School and the Health Promotion Program to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the Academic Integrity Code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication and Health Promotion major or minor.

**ADA Compliance Statement.**

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to the instructors as early in the semester as possible, no later than August 31. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The phone number for DSP is (213) 740-0776.

**Office hours and other administrative issues:**

Contact with faculty:

Susan Evans: 323-442-2613 or shevans@usc.edu; office hours: Monday: noon-1 pm; ASC 324G.
Peter Clarke: 213-740-0940 or chmc@usc.edu; office hours: Monday: noon-1 pm; ASC 324G.
Week-by-Week Topics, Readings, and Assignments


I. The Social Context of Healthcare

August 24: Doctor-patient consultations and the quality of care
Readings: Surviving Modern Medicine: Introduction and Chapter 1


August 29: Doctor-patient consultations and the quality of care (continued)


August 31: Social relations and people's well being
Readings: Surviving Modern Medicine: Chapter 3

September 5: Labor Day; no class

September 7: Social relations and people's well being, continued
Readings: Surviving Modern Medicine: Chapter 4

September 12: In-class, Quiz #1
II. Images of Health and Medicine in the Public Media

**September 14:** The press, health-hype, and public understanding about medical issues.

Readings.  


**September 19:** Depictions of medicine on dramatic television.

Readings:  

Brink, S. 2006. “Prime time to learn.” *Los Angeles Times.* COURSE PACK


**September 21:** Research about audiences and outcomes from entertainment; lobbying for access to dramatic TV

Readings:  
Brodie, M. et. al. 2001. "Communicating health information through the entertainment media.” *Health Affairs.* COURSE PACK


**September 26:** Analysis of selected episodes of, “Nurse Jackie.”

Readings: You will view selected episodes of “Nurse Jackie” before the class session.
III. Psychological Theories of Health Behavior

September 28: Theories of persuasion applied to health behavior

Readings: Influence: Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, and 3

October 3: Theories of persuasion applied to health behavior, continued

Readings: Influence: Chapters 4 and 5

October 5: Theories of persuasion applied to health behavior, continued

Readings: Influence: Chapters 6, 7, and 8


October 10: In-class project

October 12: Health Literacy, Fear Appeals, and Message Framing


October 17: Social Learning and Stages of Change


October 19 Infotainment: Health promotion in the Third World


October 24: In-class, Quiz #2

IV. Case Studies of Health Interventions and Methods of Evaluation

October 26: Reducing hunger and malnutrition; preventing and managing obesity and diabetes


October 31: Focus group research


November 2: Observation and analysis of a focus group

Readings: None

November 7: Message Tailoring


November 9: Helping people make choices about critical care

Readings: Surviving Modern Medicine, Chapter 5.


November 14: Fundamentals of surveys

Readings: None

V. Impact of the Internet and Other ITs on the Quality of Health Care

November 16: Telecommunication interventions: Web-sites and telemedicine


VI. How Built Spaces Shape Communication and People’s Health

November 21: Your personal environment and health


November 23: No class.
**November 28:** The interior design of health facilities


Ulrich, R. and Barach, P. 2006. “Designing Safe Healthcare Facilities—What are the data and where do we go from here?” COURSE PACK


Go online to karlsberger.com. Click on and skim sections about knowledge, services, and work. Also, access the website for the Society for Environmental Graphic Design, segd.org and healthdesign.org. Study award winners for recent years to learn how interior amenities and wayfinding cues affect people’s experiences with buildings.

**November 30:** Examples of three successful community-based interventions.

Readings: None

**December 12:** Final Paper due.