

**MEJO/HBEH 825 Seminar in Interdisciplinary Health Communication**  
Fall 2020

**Instructor:** Allison Lazard, PhD  
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**Meeting Time:** Wednesday 9:45am-12:30pm  
Online meetings will use this Zoom link – <https://unc.zoom.us/j/92280127361>  
Any in-person meetings will be in 340A Carroll Hall or an outside TBD location.

**Office Hours:** Monday 2:30-4pm and by appointment  
Regular office hours will be online with this Zoom link – <https://unc.zoom.us/j/94373122388>

**Course Overview:** In this graduate seminar, we will explore how communication can influence human behavior and public policy in ways that can improve health and well-being. We will focus on theory- and evidence-based approaches to 1) understand the influences of communication on health behavior and 2) design effective communication. This course is designed to serve both students trained in communication interested in health issues and students focused on public health who wish to have a stronger background in health communication theory and methods.

Throughout the course, students will have the opportunity to explore these objectives:

1. Appreciate the complexity of communicating about health behaviors through identification of cognitive, emotional, environmental, social, and other factors
2. Map how communication and persuasion may (may not, or may negatively) influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioral predictors for health behavior or health decision making
3. Merge theory and evidence from multiple disciplines to create an interdisciplinary argument to solve a health communication problem
4. Identify influence of mass communication, digital communication, and emerging technology on health behavior – both good and bad
5. Know appropriate methods to develop a health communication campaign to influence behavior, including steps for audience analysis, formative research, message development, and evaluating impact
6. Breakdown the necessary components of effective health communication – who, when, where, what – to reach audiences
7. Critically think about when health communication plays a role (or doesn't) in conjunction with policy, interventions, and other strategies

**Required Reading:** See the reading list below and on Sakai with articles for each week. Please read the week's reading before coming to class.

**Optional Reading:** We will not read this together, but many of you may be interested in the

tried and true “Pink Book” from NCI – Office of Cancer Communications, National Cancer Institute (2002). *Making health communication programs work: A planner’s guide*. NIH Pub. No. 02-5145. Available online at: <http://www.cancer.gov/pinkbook>

### Course Work & Grading:

Assignment	Weight
Reflection papers	15%
Weekly assignments (7)	30%
Final paper	45%
Class participation	10%

#### Reflection papers – Your readings:

You will submit a total of 3 one-page reflection or thought papers that analyzes and synthesizes an idea (or ideas) in one or more of the readings you have found for this course. These papers can include elements about the required course reading but should not be limited to required readings. I want to hear your ideas about what you are reading in your area and how it applies to your health communication work.

The purpose of these papers is to give you the opportunity to think, and more importantly write, about insights gained from your readings so that you will meaningful contribute to the class discussion and further progress on your study. I fully anticipate you will spend 1-2 hours a week for readings outside of the ones I have assigned.

You may critique the reading, write about questions you have, or any other angle you would like. This is not a summary though. Do not summarize any of the readings. Pick a topic and write the whole paper on it. You will get a better assessment for one in-depth topic than 2 (or more) superficial ones. This is your opportunity to demonstrate your ability for critical thinking.

Reflection papers should be submitted before class the week you want them to be accounted for. Please try to submit only one a week. Submit the full citation of any referenced articles and link to article(s) with the reflection paper.

#### Weekly assignments:

There are 7 weekly assignments: 3 ideas, health behavior/communication focus, identifying predictors of selected behavior, literature pre-cursor, literature review draft, conceptual model, and methods (or recommendations if methods are not applicable). These are opportunities to build and get feedback on your health communication project to presenting and submitting the final paper.

#### Final paper:

The final paper and presentation should demonstrate the culmination of the entire semester’s work. This is a standard research paper suitable for a conference submission. The paper should be no longer than 5000 words (or less if norm in your subfield) and include relevant sections: introduction, theory and literature review, methods (if applicable), discussion, etc. This paper is expected to be of much

higher quality than the weekly assignments. It needs to be clearly and concisely written and suitable as a component or full paper for a peer-review submission process (journal, grant, etc.).

Many approaches for the final paper are acceptable. These include, but are not limited to: completed study, project proposal, theory extension paper, or grant proposal.

**Grade scale:** High pass (H), Pass (P), Low pass (L), Fail (F)

- H - The work is intellectually rigorous, shows an exceptional understanding of the material and is error free.
- P - The work illustrates a good effort at understanding the material and has few errors.
- L - The work indicates some progress toward gaining an understanding of the material and has substantial errors.
- F - The work shows little to no understanding of the assignment or was not completed in a timely manner.

**Schedule:** The schedule includes the main topics for each week and the reading required for the meeting. Students are expected to have completed the assigned readings BEFORE coming to class. **Note:** Based on your input and our progress, I reserve the right to amend and change the syllabus, reading schedules, and assignments during the semester.

Week	Dates	Topic, Reading, & Assignments
1	8/12	INTRODUCTION  <b>Assignment due next Wed (week 2, 8/19):</b> 3 ideas for the health communication paper/project you would like to conduct. Clear and concise statement of the problem, why it is important to scholars, practitioners, society. 250 words per idea. Include how these ideas are related to your career/education goals.
2	8/19	THEORY- & EVIDENCE-BASED HEALTH COMMUNICATION <b>Read:</b> See reading list on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> 3 ideas <b>Assignment due next Wed (week 3, 8/26):</b> Select your health behavior/communication focus. Write a brief summary of the behavior and why it is critical to study. This can be an expansion (or potential narrowing) of one of your 3 ideas. This will eventually serve as the basis of your argument in your introduction and discussion/conclusion. Remember to keep the “health” in health communication at the forefront.
3	8/26	PREDICTORS OF BEHAVIOR (CHANGE) <b>Read:</b> See reading list on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> Health behavior/communication focus <b>Assignment due in two Wednesdays (week 5, 9/9):</b> Identify predictors

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(constructs) of your health behavior that can be influenced by communication. Support your selection of key predictors (or the exclusion of some) with theoretical frameworks.

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4      9/2      INFORMATION PROCESSING & EMOTION

**Read:** See reading list on Sakai

**Assignment due this week:** None

**Assignment due in next Wed (week 5, 9/9):** Predictors for health behavior/communication

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5      9/9      MEDIA CONTENT & INFORMATION SHARING

**Read:** See reading list on Sakai

**Assignment due this week:** Predictors for health behavior/communication

**Assignment due next Wed (week 6, 9/16):** Develop topic sentences and establish the flow of your argument, incorporating constructs and theories identified.

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6      9/16      HEALTH LITERACY

**Read:** See reading list on Sakai

**Assignment due this week:** Topic sentences and argument flow

**Assignment due two Wednesdays (week 8, 9/30):** Revise your literature review. Fill in support for each topic sentence with a synthesis of empirical evidence, theoretical developments, and/or identification of what is missing/still controversial for your health behavior context. Make sure to think about how the details you are adding support or challenge your argument.

An exceptional health communication literature review clearly identifies key predictors (constructs) for a health behavior that might be modifiable through communication. These selected constructs are supported and situated in theoretical frameworks that pull from many disciplines. The literature builds an argument for why these constructs are influential for behavior change (or reinforcement) through synthesized evidence. In other words, the literature builds a strong rationale for the necessity of the research and spells out the contributions of potential findings.

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7      9/23      AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

**Read:** See reading list on Sakai

**Assignment due this week:** None

**Assignment due next Wed (week 8, 9/30):** Literature review

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8	9/30	CONSULTATIONS – See schedule on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> Literature review
9	10/7	FORMATIVE RESEARCH – CAMPAIGNS PART 1 <b>Read:</b> See reading list on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> None <b>Assignment due next Wed (week 10, 10/14):</b> Develop your conceptual model to guide health communication work. Identify key components for a simplified guide that can be applied for health promotion.
10	10/14	MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT – CAMPAIGNS PART 2 <b>Read:</b> See reading list on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> Conceptual model <b>Assignment due in two Wednesdays (week 12, 10/28):</b> Draft your methods or recommendations if methods are not applicable.
11	10/21	UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCES <b>Read:</b> See reading list on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> None <b>Assignment due in two Wednesdays (week 12, 10/28):</b> Methods/ Recommendations
12	10/28	COMMUNICATION IN CONJUNCTION WITH POLICY, ETC. <b>Read:</b> See reading list on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> Methods/Recommendations
13	11/4	CONSULTATIONS – See schedule on Sakai  <b>Assignment due this week:</b> None <b>Assignment due in next Wed (week 14, 11/11):</b> Presentation
14	11/11	FINAL PRESENTATIONS Prepare a presentation with visuals a la the conference of your choice. No longer than 7-10 minutes. You will be timed. Questions from the audience immediately after each presentation. <b>Final papers due – Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup> @ 8am (subject to change if final exam schedule changes)</b>

**Honor Code:** I expect that each student will conduct himself or herself within the guidelines of the University honor system (<http://honor.unc.edu>). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to

produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see the course instructor or Senior Associate Dean Charlie Tuggle, or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

**Seeking Help:** If you need individual assistance, it's your responsibility to meet with the instructor. If you are serious about wanting to improve your performance in the course, the time to seek help is as soon as you are aware of the problem – whether the problem is difficulty with course material, a disability, or an illness.

**Diversity and Inclusion:** Our school adopted [diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements](#) in spring 2016 with accompanying goals. It complements the University policy on [Prohibiting Harassment and Discrimination](#). In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

**Special Accommodations:** If you require special accommodations to attend or participate in this course, please let the instructor know as soon as possible. If you need information about disabilities visit the Accessibility Services website at <https://accessibility.unc.edu/>

**ACCREDITATION:** Our school's accrediting body outlines a number of values you should be aware of and competencies you should be able to demonstrate by the time you graduate from our program. Learn more about them here:  
<http://www2.ku.edu/~acejmc/PROGRAM/PRINCIPLES.SHTML#vals&comps>

No single course could possibly give you all of these values and competencies; but collectively, our classes are designed to build your abilities in each of these areas. In this class, we will address a number of the values and competencies, with special emphasis on these six bullet dots under "Professional values and competencies" in the link above.

- Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
- Understand concepts and apply theories in the use and presentation of images and information;
- Think critically, creatively and independently;
- Conduct research and evaluate information by methods appropriate to the communications professions in which they work;
- Write correctly and clearly in forms and styles appropriate for the communications professions, audiences and purposes they serve;
- Apply tools and technologies appropriate for the communications professions in which they work.