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**CMST 4112 Health Communication**  
Communication Studies 4112  
MWF 9:30-10:20  
111 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  
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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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## Course Grading

Students will be evaluated on both individual and group performance in the class; including exams, the final exam, reflection papers, individual exercises, and group exercises. Details for each of these areas are provided after the schedule of classes. Grades will be based on the standard 10-point scale out of a possible 600 points: A > 540 points, B > 480, C > 420, D > 360, F < 360.

<i>Exams (3 at 75 points each)</i>	<i>225 total points</i>
<i>“Rolling” Final</i>	<i>125 points</i>
<i>Reflection Papers (10 at 10 points each)</i>	<i>100 total</i>
<i>Individual Exercises (5 at 10 points each)</i>	<i>50 points total</i>
<i>Group Exercises (2 at 50 points each)</i>	<i>100 points total</i>
<b><i>Total</i></b>	<b><i>600 points</i></b>

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## Course Schedule

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Assignment</b>
January 14	introduction, review syllabus, general housekeeping
January 16	Course overview and structure, arc of the semester
January 19	Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday – no class
January 21	Chapter 1: Introduction <i>Reflection paper due</i> <i>look for news articles/stories and submit link by 5:00 p.m. Thursday</i>
January 23	Chapter 2: History and Current Issues health in the news – discussion of items sent by class members
January 26	Chapter 7: Cultural Conceptions of Health and Illness
January 28	Chapter 11: Health Images in the Media <i>Reflection paper due</i>
January 30	<i>Health images exercise</i>
February 2	Chapter 6: Diversity in Health Care
February 4	Culture and Health Communication summary and synthesis <i>Reflection paper due</i>
February 6	<b>Exam 1 – chapters 1, 2, 7, 11, and 6</b>

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February 9	Overview of Caregiving Issues
February 11	Chapter 3: Patient-Caregiver Communication <i>Reflection paper due</i>
February 13	Chapter 5: Caregiver Perspective
February 16	Mardi Gras break – no class
February 18	Mardi Gras break – no class
February 20	<i>Interdisciplinary team exercise</i> <i>“rolling” final question 1 response due</i>
February 23	Chapter 4: Patient Perspective <i>Reflection paper due</i>
February 25	Chapter 8: Social Support, Family Caregiving, and End of Life
February 27	Chapter 8 (continued)
March 2	<i>family caregiving case study</i> <i>Reflection paper due</i>
March 4	Chapter 9: eHealth, mHealth, and Telemedicine
March 6	group work day for eHealth exercise
March 9	group work day for eHealth exercise <i>“rolling” final question 2 response due</i>
March 11	<i>eHealth presentations</i> <i>Reflection paper due</i>
March 13	<i>eHealth presentations</i>
March 16	<i>eHealth presentations</i>
March 18	Caregiving and Health Communication summary and synthesis <i>Reflection paper due</i>
March 20	<b>Exam 2 – chapters 3, 4, 5, 8, and 9</b>
March 23	Health Care Organizations and Public Health overview
March 25	Chapter 12: Public Health Crises and Health Care Reform <i>Reflection paper due</i>
March 27	<i>Risk communication exercise</i>
March 30	Chapter 10: Health Care Administration, Human Resources, Marketing, and PR <i>Reflection paper due</i>
April 1	Chapter 13: Planning Health Promotion Campaigns <i>AMA career exercise due</i>
April 3	Spring Break – no class
April 6	Spring Break – no class
April 8	Spring Break – no class
April 10	Spring Break – no class

April 13	Chapter 14: Designing and Implementing Health Campaigns <i>Reflection paper due</i>
April 15	group work day for health promotion campaigns exercise <i>“rolling” final question 3 response due</i>
April 17	group work day for health promotion campaigns exercise
April 20	<i>health campaigns presentations</i> <i>Reflection paper due</i>
April 22	<i>health campaigns presentations</i>
April 24	<i>health campaigns presentations</i>
April 27	Health Care Organizations and Public Health summary and synthesis <i>Reflection paper due</i>
April 29	<b>Exam 3 – chapters 12, 10, 13, and 14</b>
May 1	review for final
May 4	<b>Final</b>
Monday	10:00 a.m. - 12:00 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.

**Reflection papers.** *Purpose.* Health communication is inherently an applied area of study – we all are healthy and ill at various points in our lives and the health of our loved ones often impacts us in various ways. The reflection papers will offer you an opportunity to think about your own roles, experiences, attitudes, beliefs, etc. *Format.* Each Wednesday I will post one or two prompts on Moodle. You may select which one(s) you answer. Your response is due (either electronically or in hard copy) the next Wednesday at class time. Each response should be 1-2 pages, typed, double-spaced. A total of 10 reflection papers will count toward your grade, so you may choose to skip several, to answer them early in the semester, or whatever strategy you choose. Feel free to answer more than 10 as the highest grades will be used in calculating your final course grade.

**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.

- **AMA 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 with the chance to consider potential careers, or to eliminate some options. *Format.* I will post the link on Moodle that leads you to the AMA career website. 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. 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.