

# Communication 4240

## Science Communication

### Spring 2022

Course ID: Comm4240  
Course Title: Science Communication  
Class Meetings: Mondays 9:10am – 11:00am  
Classroom: Journalism building 371

Professor: Graham Dixon  
Office: Derby Hall 3045A  
Zoom Office Hours: Mondays 12:00pm to 1:30 pm  
E-mail: Dixon.716@osu.edu

#### **Course Objectives and Outcomes**

This course is a seminar focusing on the theory and practice of science communication to public audiences, designed for both communication majors and non-majors. Topics include how audiences understand and process science information, expert communication by scientists and policy-makers to public audiences, informal communication about science in museums and science centers, science journalism, the role of the mass media in shaping understanding and beliefs about science, edu-tainment and documentaries, and citizen-science. We will also focus heavily on the role that communication processes play in publicly controversial scientific issues such as Covid-19, global climate change, evolution/intelligent design, autism & vaccines, etc. Students in this class come from a variety of personal and academic backgrounds. Active and civil discussion is highly important in this class. Listening, questioning, and debate are encouraged; personal attacks are not.

**Instruction:** This is a hybrid course. The primary methods of instruction are lecture, in-class activities, and online discussion and activities.

## Mode of Course Delivery and Attendance Policy

This course is delivered as a hybrid course, with 2 hours dedicated to in-person lecture and 1 hour of online content per week. Given the continued high prevalence of COVID-19, including breakthrough cases among vaccinated individuals, **students should not attend class if they are feeling sick**. It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the virus to others. Most students should be able to complete a successful semester despite illness-induced absence. If you are absent due to illness, including but not limited to COVID, I will give you a reasonable opportunity to make up missed work. **You do not need to provide a physician's document of illness, but you should advise me via email as soon as you are safely able to do so.**

## Grading

Assignments	Points	% of Final Grade
Science documentary review	20	20%
Special Topic paper	25	25%
Online weekly assignments	25	25%
Quizzes	30	30%

**A** = 93-100; **A-** = 90-92; **B+** = 87-89; **B** = 83-86; **B-** = 80-82; **C+** = 77-79; **C** = 73-76; **C-** = 70-72; **D+** = 67-69; **D** = 60-66; **F** = Below 60

## Assignments and Exams

**Required Readings.** There is no textbook for this course. Instead, PDFs of selected chapters and articles will be posted on Carmen for each class – refer to the course schedule for each day's assigned readings. Students are expected to complete all readings prior to class so that they will be prepared to discuss the material in class. If any student is interested in additional readings on the assigned or related topics, please feel free to contact me and I can suggest additional resources.

**Online assignments.** Every week there will be an online activity for students to complete that cover the week's themes. Grading will be based on completion. The assignment will be available from Monday after class and will close on the following Sunday at 11:59pm. I will excuse one missed assignment. Because of this, I will not accept late assignments.

**Science Documentary Review.** Students will conduct an academic review of a science-based documentary film from a list of films (or a film of your choice with instructor approval). Specifically, students will apply theories and concepts learned in class when assessing their chosen film. Importantly, this is a fun assignment that gets students thinking more deeply about the role of communication and mass media play in promoting public understanding of science. The paper will be about 5 pages double spaced, not including references. You will turn in your paper digitally through Carmen.

**Special topic paper.** This paper requires you to choose one topic area of interest (Pseudoscience, Covid-19, Open Science, etc) and assess the role of communication in the topic's challenges, scope, and impact to society. This paper will be about 10 pages double spaced, not including references.

**Quizzes.** You have two, twenty question online quizzes in this course. All quizzes will be assessed with multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions. Access to quizzes will be for a 12 hour period on a specific date (see course schedule) and you will be given 40 minutes to complete them. The first quiz covers material from the first half of the course; the second quiz covers material from the second half of the course. Both quizzes are open book/note and are administered on the course's Carmen site.

All quizzes cover in-class material as well as content from your readings. To do well in this course means you will need to read every assigned reading.

### **Course Policies**

**Mutual Respect.** Students in this class come from a variety of personal, political, and academic backgrounds, so realize that there will be different perspectives. Your responsibility is to be civil to others and to opinions that differ from yours.

**Technology use and General Politeness.** Technology (phones, laptops, etc) use for non-class related reasons can be very distracting for the professor and for classmates. You're paying a lot of money for this course, so don't waste it on Facebook and texting with friends that you'll see later in the day. The professor reserves the right to take off grade points for repeat offenders.

**Professor and Teaching Assistant's Use of Electronic Mail and Messaging.** There may be occasions where I will need to get in touch with you outside of regular class hours. Email will usually be the first means by which contact will be initiated. It is important that you check your OSU email account regularly, and make sure you purge your account of unneeded email so that new email can get through. If you do not use your OSU email address as your primary email account, please arrange through OIT to have your OSU email forwarded to your preferred account. For instructions on how to have your email forwarded, see [http://8help.osu.edu/forms/mail\\_forwarding.html](http://8help.osu.edu/forms/mail_forwarding.html).

**Academic Misconduct.** It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>."

**All instances of cheating and plagiarism will be reported to COAM for a formal hearing. Please do not cheat or plagiarize. Maximum grade penalty is failing the entire course.**

**Statement about disability services.** Students with disabilities (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions) that have been certified by the Office of Student Life Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office of Student Life Disability Services is located in 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue; telephone 614- 292-3307, [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu).

**Diversity.** The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

**Title IX.** Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

**COVID-19 Accommodations.** The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's [request process](#), managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. **SLDS contact information:** [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

## Course Schedule

Week and Dates	Week Overview
1 1/10	What is (Science) Communication?
2 1/17	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. No Class
3 1/24	Communication 101
4 1/31	Process of Science Communication
5 2/7	Open Science and its controversies
6 2/14	Interpersonal Communication and Science Mis(Communication)
7 2/21	Science and Entertainment Media
8 2/28	Science in the news • Quiz 1 (available from 8am to 8pm EST on Carmen)
9 3/7	Informal Science Education • Documentary review due
10 3/14	Spring Break No Class
11 3/21	Citizen Science
12	Pseudoscience and society

<b>3/28</b>	
<b>13</b> <b>4/04</b>	Science Communication and in online spaces
<b>14</b> <b>4/11</b>	Public Understanding of Science
<b>15</b> <b>4/18</b>	Science Controversies, misinformation, and correction <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Quiz 2 (<b>available from 8am to 8pm EST on Carmen</b>)</li></ul>
<b>16</b> <b>4/25</b>	Covid-19 Science Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Special topic paper due</li></ul>