

# COMM 4737

## Health Communication in Mass Mediated Contexts



**Instructor:** Dr. Jingbo Meng  
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**Class time:** TuTh 12:45 pm – 2:05 pm EST  
**Instruction Mode:** Hybrid  
**Classroom:** Journalism Bldg. 270 and Zoom

### Course Description:

This course is designed to increase your knowledge and understanding of an important applied area of communication science: Health Communication. The course aims to provide a substantive foundation of relevant theories, research, practices and current issues related to various aspects of health communication. Three modules will be offered in this course. The first module of the course will introduce major health communication theories. The second module will focus on communication technologies for health promotion and education. The third module will discuss a few interesting and trendy topics in the field of health communication.

### COMM 4737 GOALS AND EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (ELOs)

Course goals and learning outcomes are described below. See course assignments below for information on how each course ELO is assessed.

**4737 Goal 1: By the end of this course, students will have an appreciation for the role of theory in explaining and influencing health behavior resulting from mass media exposure.**

Successful students will be able to:

ELO 1.1: Identify individual, social and cognitive predictors of health behaviors as defined by theory.

ELO 1.2: Recognize theoretical constructs embedded within health messages.

ELO 1.3: Compare and contrast major theories and methods used in health message design.

ELO 1.4: Critique the potential effectiveness of a physical or mental health message based on theory.

**4737 Goal 2: By the end of this course, students will understand techniques for developing effective theory-based health communication messages.**

Successful students will be able to:

ELO 2.1: Illustrate the steps involved in the health message design process.

ELO 2.2: Apply theory to the development of a physical or mental health message.

ELO 2.3: Design a health message that is clearly written and effectively designed.

ELO 2.4: Identify strategies to assist the lay public in accessing credible health information.

ELO 2.5: Articulate the reasons that persuasive health messages may fail.

ELO 2.6: Identify and assess innovative methods of generating persuasive health messages.

**GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS AND EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES (ELOs)**

In addition to being a required course in the health communication certificate program, it is also listed as a thematic course (Health and Wellness) in the General Education (GE) Curriculum. Students successfully completing activities designed to assess course ELOs, students will also meet GE course ELOs. See course assignments below for information about how GE ELOs are assessed.

**GE Goal 1: Successful students will analyze an important topic or idea at a more advanced and in-depth level than the foundations.**

GE ELO 1.1: Engage in critical and logical thinking about the topic or idea of the theme.

GE ELO 1.2: Engage in advanced, in-depth, scholarly exploration of the topic or idea of the theme.

**GE Goal 2: Successful students will integrate approaches to the theme by making connections to out-of-classroom experiences with academic knowledge or across disciplines and/or to work they have done in previous classes and that they anticipate doing in future.**

GE ELO 2.1: Identify, describe and synthesize approaches or experiences as they apply to the theme.

GE ELO 2.2: Demonstrate a developing sense of self as a leader through reflection, self-assessment and creative work, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.

**GE Theme Goal: Students will explore and analyze health and well-being through attention to at least two dimensions of well-being (e.g., physical, mental, emotional, career, environmental, spiritual, intellectual, creative, financial, etc.).**

THEME ELO 1.1: Explore and analyze health and wellbeing from theoretical, socio-economic and scientific, historical, cultural, technological, policy or personal perspectives.

THEME ELO 1.2: Identify, reflect on, or apply strategies for promoting health and well-being.

**HYBRID COURSE DELIVERY**

This is a 3-hour hybrid course. It is designed to be roughly 50% in-person instruction and 50% online instruction with a mixture of synchronous and asynchronous sessions. For the online component you will view additional lectures and/or other media (videos and podcasts) and complete reflection and assignments, which help you process readings and get prepared for class. All of the online activities

are scheduled on Thursdays indicated by “Online” in the course schedule and in the carmen module for each week.

### **Textbook & Readings**

There is no textbook required for this class. I recommend the following book if you are interested in reading more materials closely related to this class.

Cho, H. (Ed.). (2012). *Health Communication Message Design: Theory and Practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Assigned readings (journal articles and popular press articles), films/videos are noted on the syllabus course schedule and included in the class module on carmen.

### **OFFICE HOURS**

Weekly office hours will be held on Zoom on Thursday from 11-12 AM (also linked in Carmen):

<https://osu.zoom.us/j/97680055574?pwd=L1BLZzcxVkxtbkZtQzJPanp6MUswQT09>

If that day/time doesn't work for you to attend office hours, please email me to set up an appointment. I will also stay after class to answer questions and chat about any concerns you have.

### **Course Requirements:**

The following is a list of assignments for this course and the points that are allotted for each.

Comprehensive assignment and grade information is always available on Carmen. I will use the standard OSU grade scheme and will round up final grades (e.g. 92.5% would round up to 93%). Should you have any questions or concerns about assignments or your grade, please stop by office hours or make an appointment to talk with me.

**A. Two Exams (100 points)** - There will be a midterm (60 points) and non-cumulative final exam (40 points) in this course. You will be tested on information from all aspects of the course (course readings, lectures, and class discussions). I will provide a study guide and an in-class review to help you prepare. It will be closed-book exam. The exams will include multiple choice, true/false questions, and short-answer questions that will ask you to recall information about course topics, concepts and theories, identify key concepts embedded in messages, compare and contrast theories and approaches. Both exams will be administered online.

*This assignment is designed to assess COMM 4737 ELOs: 1.1-1.3, 2.1, 2.4-2.6.*

- **GE ELO Assessment:** These two exams move beyond simple recall of information by asking you to compare and contrast theories, identify course concepts embedded in sample messages, and demonstrate your ability to apply theories and concepts to message design. Therefore, the two exams allow for an advanced, in-depth scholarly exploration on a topic (GE ELO 1.2).

**B. Online Learning Assignments (42 points, 6 points per assignment)** – Because this is a hybrid course, you will be asked to complete online learning activities most weeks to help you process course material and prepare for assignments. Specifics about these assignments are on the course schedule and posted on Carmen, but they include such things as finding examples of messages that align with the theory or concepts in a given week and critiquing and reflecting on that message, finding and reflecting on a message that was ineffective and discussing ways to improve, and critiquing approaches for countering misinformation, etc.

*Online Learning Assignments are designed to assess COMM 4737 ELOs: 1.2, 1.4, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.6*

- *GE Learning Outcomes:* Message share assignments allow for in-depth analysis and critique of messages, self-assessment and reflection on message design. Message shares are designed to build your skills and confidence as a health message designer, as they ask you to engage in critical and logical thinking (GE ELO 1.1), conduct in-depth scholarly exploration of a course topic (GE ELO 1.2), describe and synthesize approaches and experiences (GE ELO 2.1), and engage in reflection and self-assessment to build skills and leadership in health communication (GE ELO 2.2). The assignments also require you explore health and well-being from a variety of perspectives (GE Theme ELO 1.1), as well as identify and reflect on for health promotion and well-being (GE Theme ELO 1.2).

- C. Group Project and Presentation (20 points)** – You will form 3-person groups to complete a group project and present your project at the end of the semester. In the project, you will identify two health communication messages/campaigns and use the theories/models learned in the class to explain why they are effective or not effective. You will compare the two messages/campaigns in terms of their strengths and weakness, and comment on the strategies of how the campaigns/messages were generated.

*This assignment is designed to assess COMM 4737 ELOs: 1.1-1.4, 2.4-2.6.*

- *GE ELO Assessment:* The group project demonstrates your ability to apply theories and concepts to real-world health campaigns and message design. It requires a holistic understanding of the course materials. Therefore, the completion of the project will help students to meet the following learning goals: GE ELO 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2.

**D. Attendance (12 points)**

I use a flexible attendance policy in this course. You may miss up to TWO classes (for any reason) without a loss of attendance points. You will also not lose attendance points for missing a class due to illness, personal or family emergency, or a university-excused absence. I just ask that you let me know you will be absent before class or within 72 hours of missing the class. After those two classes, you will lose **THREE** points for every unexcused class where attendance is taken. Missing class for work or a family vacation would not be an excused absence.

I will take attendance using Carmen Rollcall. I do not necessarily take attendance every time we meet, but instead, I will be spontaneous give the amount of content that we will cover on that day and if there's sufficient time to do it.

**E. Participation (10 points)**

The instructor will propose a discussion question related to the class content every week. You are strongly encouraged to participate in the discussion by offering your personal opinions and thoughts. You may use your personal experience or class-related concepts in forming your own argument. The instructor will take a note on your frequency and quality of your discussion participation.

**Late and Make-up work:**

Each test is to be taken on the designated exam date. Rescheduled exams are not allowed except in truly extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control. In the rare event that an

emergency arises, it is the student's complete responsibility to 1) inform the professor prior to the exam time, and 2) provide the professor with written documentation of the emergency (e.g., medical note from a certified physician). Autumn/Spring break trips, and family vacations do not constitute an emergency.

You are strongly encouraged to turn in your assignments on time. Late submission within the next 24 hours after the due time will receive half credits at the most. Late submission within the next week after the due time will receive 1/3 of the full credits at the most. After a week, no late work will be accepted and you will receive 0 point on your assignment.

### **Plagiarism**

All work in this course is to be individually developed. Plagiarism includes using another person's writing without giving them credit, using large verbatim sections of the work of another person or online source (even a public source) or submitting something you have written for another class. If you are unsure, please give credit to your source or talk to me about it. Students who plagiarize will be penalized and reported to university officials. You will also receive a grade of zero for the assignment where plagiarism occurred.

### **Copyright Disclaimer**

The materials used in connection with this course may be subject to copyright protection and are only for the use of students officially enrolled in the course for the educational purposes associated with the course. Copyright law must be considered before copying, retaining, or disseminating materials outside of the course.

### **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://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students)).

### **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, Melissa Mayhan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu).

### **Instructor Illness or Absence**

If the *instructor* is ill, in-person sessions will be moved online to Zoom and/or recorded and posted online. You will be notified via email of this change, and it will be posted on Carmen in the announcements.

## **COVID-19 Emergency Financial Assistance**

Ohio State has emergency grants available to aid students who are facing unexpected financial challenges related to the pandemic. Students may use the funds toward any component of the cost of attendance, or for emergency costs that arise as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic such as food, housing, tuition, health care (including mental health care) or childcare. Please visit the website for more information. <https://sfa.osu.edu/contact-us/consumer-disclosure/COVID-19-aid>.

## **Food Security**

The Ohio State University is committed to ensuring that all students have access to adequate and healthy food. Any undergraduate or graduate student with a BuckID may confidentially use the Buckeye Food Alliance food pantries. No proof of need is required. The pantry is located in Lincoln Tower, Suite 150 (1800 Cannon Dr., Columbus, OH 43210). Check the website or call for current hours. <https://www.buckeyefoodalliance.org>, 614-688-2508.

## **Statement on 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.

## **Mental Health Statement**

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. If you or someone you know are suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life's Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](https://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614--292--5766, and 24-hour emergency help is also available through the 24/7 National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1--800--273-TALK or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org). 614-292-5766.

## **Disability 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; 614-292-3307; slds.osu.edu; 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

### Tentative Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings and Assignments	Reminder
<b>Module I: Fundamentals in Media and Health Communication</b>			
Week 1			
8/22	Introductions, Course Policies & Schedule		
8/24	Online: View Video Benefits of Health Communication and Marketing (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)	Assignment 1: Find a memorable health message that you have ever encountered, and reflect on what made it effective	Assignment 1 Due: 11:59 pm 8/25
Week 2			
8/29	Health Communication Planning Process - The PRECEDE/PROCEED Model	Reading: Crosby, R., & Noar, S. M. (2011). What is a planning model? An introduction to PRECEDE-PROCEED. <i>Journal of public Health Dentistry</i> , 71, S7-S15.	
8/31	Online: View Video: Women and Heart Disease Prevention: The Red Dress (National Institutes of Health)	Reading: Long, T., Taubenheim, A. M., Wayman, J., Temple, S., & Ruoff, B. A. (2008). The Heart Truth: Using the power of branding and social marketing to increase awareness of heart disease in women. <i>Social Marketing Quarterly</i> , 14(3), 3-29  Assignment 2: Based on the reading, please summarize what steps/elements are included in formative research.	Assignment 2 Due: 11:59 pm 9/1
Week 3			
9/5	Classic Theories of Behavior Change: Health Belief Model	Reading: Jose, R., Narendran, M., Bindu, A., Beevi, N., Manju, L., & Benny, P. V. (2021). Public perception and preparedness for the pandemic COVID 19: a health belief model approach. <i>Clinical epidemiology and global health</i> , 9, 41-46.	
9/7	Online: Theory of Planned Behavior  Synchronous via zoom, Recording will be uploaded	Reading: Why public health messaging should emphasize vaccine acceptance, not hesitancy <a href="https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-02-23/vaccine-hesitancy-public-health-message">https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2021-02-23/vaccine-hesitancy-public-health-message</a>	

Week 4			
9/12	Emotions and Fear Appeals in Health Messaging  An examination of the Extended Parallel Process Model	Reading: Chou, W. Y. S., & Budenz, A. (2020). Considering emotion in COVID-19 vaccine communication: addressing vaccine hesitancy and fostering vaccine confidence. <i>Health Communication</i> , 35(14), 1718-1722.	
9/14	Online: View Sticky Frames/Why Negative Lodge in the Mind and What to Do About It (Lecture by Dr. Allison Ledgerwood)	Assignment 3: Find, evaluate and reflect on a fear appeal message	Assignment 3 Due: 11:50 pm 9/15
Week 5			
9/19	Psychological Reactance and Mixed Emotions	Readings: Reynolds-Tylus, T. (2019). Psychological reactance and persuasive health communication: A review of the literature. <i>Frontiers in Communication</i> , 56. <a href="https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2019.00056">https://doi.org/10.3389/fcomm.2019.00056</a>  Ball, H., & Wozniak, T. R. (2021). Why do some Americans resist COVID-19 prevention behavior? An analysis of issue importance, message fatigue, and reactance regarding COVID-19 messaging. <i>Health Communication</i> , 1-8.	
9/21	Online: View Video: Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change	Assignment 4: Use Transtheoretical Model to identify target audience for a health news story	Assignment 4 Due: 11:59 pm 9/22
Week 6			
9/26	Health (mis)information - Helping the public access credible health information and detect misinformation	<b>Readings:</b> Macias, W., Lee, M., & Cunningham, N. (2018). Inside the mind of the online health information searcher using wording? think-aloud protocol. <i>Health Communication</i> , 33(12), 1482-1493.  Walter, N., Brooks, J. J., Saucier, C. J., & Suresh, S. (2021). Evaluating the impact of attempts to correct health misinformation on social media: A meta-analysis. <i>Health Communication</i> , 36(13), 1776-1784.  Peng, Lim, & Meng (2022). Persuasive strategies in online health misinformation: A systematic review. <i>Information, Communication &amp; Society</i> .	



9/28	Online: Watch Misinformation and Media Literacy (PBS)	Start reviewing materials for the mid-term exam	
Week 7			
10/3	Catch up lecture & Midterm Exam Review		
10/5	Complete Mid-Term Exam		
Week 8			
10/10	Online: Writing Effective and Clear Health Messages for Print and Social Media	View Video: Effective Health Communication & Health Literacy (National Library of Medicine)	
10/12	Autumn Break – No Class		
Week 9			
10/17	Health Narratives & Entertainment-Education: The Persuasive Nature of Stories	Read: Hursting, L. M., & Comello, M. L. G. (2021). Creating Narrative Entertainment for Health Communication: Perspectives from Practice. <i>Journal of Creative Communications</i> . Online First.  Baezconde-Garbanati, L. A., Chatterjee, J. S., Frank, L. B., Murphy, S. T., Moran, M. B., Werth, L. N., ... & O'Brien, D. (2014). Tamale Lesson: A case study of a narrative health communication intervention. <i>Journal of Communication in Healthcare</i> , 7(2), 82-92.	
10/19	Online: View Episode 1/Season 2 Trailer for New Amsterdam and Interview with Executive Produced about the episode on COVID-19 healthcare worker burnout.	Assignment 5: Complete New Amsterdam Reflection Exercise	Assignment 5 Due: 11:59 pm 10/20
<b>Module II: Interactive Media and Health Communication</b>			
Week 10			
10/24	Internet and Health Communication		
10/26	Online Synchronous: Group Project Meeting I	Discussion Project	
Week 11			

10/31	Mobile health	Reading: Zhao, Freeman, & Li. (2016). Can Mobile Phone Apps Influence People's Health Behavior Change? An Evidence Review. JMIR, 18, 11. <a href="https://www.jmir.org/2016/11/e287/">https://www.jmir.org/2016/11/e287/</a>	
11/2	Online: Watch Video (1) Mobile-Based Health Approaches Contribute to Increase in Global Workplace Physical Activity; (2) Using Mobile Health Tools	Assignment 6: Discuss the advantage of mobile-health over the traditional mass-media health communication (e.g., TV, Billboards) in delivering health messages	Assignment 6 Due: 11:59 pm 11/3
Week 12			
11/7	Persuasive AI for Health Communication Messages	Readings: Huang, G., & Sai, W. A. N. G. (2023). Is artificial intelligence more persuasive than humans? A meta-analysis.  Karinshak, E., Liu, S. X., Park, J. S., & Hancock, J. T. (2023). Working With AI to Persuade: Examining a Large Language Model's Ability to Generate Pro-Vaccination Messages. <i>Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction</i> , 7(CSCW1), 1-29.	
11/9	Online Read the Article: Artificial Intelligence for Health Message Generation: An Empirical Study Using A Large Language Model and Prompt Engineering	Assignment 7: Write down your thoughts about using AI for generating health communication messages.	Assignment 7 Due: 11:59 pm 11/10
Week 13			
11/14	Social Networks and The Two-Step Flow Hypothesis	Reading: Valente, T. W. & Lombardo, A. Mass and Interpersonal Communication: Buzz for Behavior Change.	
11/16	Online Synchronous: Social Networks and Health Communication continued. Recordings will be uploaded	Reading: Kostygina, G., Tran, H., Binns, S., Szczypka, G., Emery, S., Vallone, D., & Hair, E. (2020). Boosting health campaign reach and engagement through use of social media influencers and memes. <i>Social Media+ Society</i> , 6(2), 2056305120912475.	
Week 14			
11/21	Group Project Meeting II	Prepare presentations	
11/23	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	
Week 15			
11/28	Presentation I		
11/30	Presentation II		
Week 16			

12/5	Final Exam Review		
Final Exam	Dec 8		