COMM 7870: Media, Campaigns, and Health

Spring 2026 #34352
Class days and time: Wednesdays and Fridays 9:35am-10:55am
Classroom: Derby 3150

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Office hours: By appointment

Course description and objectives

This course is designed to examine social scientific theories that are applicable to the design, implementation, and evaluation of media-based public health interventions. Theories of media effects, persuasion, and behavior change and their applications to mediated communication-based solutions to public health problems will be discussed. Overall, the goal of the examination and discussion is to help students attain informed perspectives on the role of messages and the media in behavior change and social change processes. In particular, this course emphasizes critical examination of extant theory and practice, including their assumptions and evidence. Taking into account the challenges and opportunities brought about by new media, this course will seek to identify avenues for improving existing health communication theory and action. As a graduate seminar, this course expects each student to be an active participant in all class activities and to utilize the reading assignments, classroom discussion, and term paper to develop, identify, and articulate an individual agenda for research and action in media-based health communication.

With this in mind, the primary objectives of this course are to help students:

1. Obtain knowledge about the theoretical basis of health communication interventions;
2. Critically evaluate theories used in media-based public health interventions;
3. Develop the ability to apply the theoretical knowledge to the design, implementation, and evaluation of health communication interventions;
4. Identify and articulate opportunities for improving extant theories and practices related to health communication and interventions; and
5. Assess how changes in the media landscape create new challenges and directions for health communication theory and practice.

Reading assignments

Journal articles (see the Reading List section); copies are available on Carmen.

Course format

Generally, each class will be comprised of the following components: presentation, discussion, and instructor wrap-up. Each presentation is expected to be about 35 minutes, followed by or woven together with about 35 minutes of discussion. The instructor will use the remaining time (about 10 minutes) to provide feedback on key issues covered during the presentation and discussion.

Course requirements

Overall, each student will make topic presentations and lead class discussions for assigned topics, take one exam, and write and present a term paper during this semester. Students are expected to actively engage in discussion during class.

Course grade components
- Topic presentations & discussion leading: 40%
- Topic discussion questions: 15%
- Exam: 10%
- Term paper: 15%
- Term paper presentation: 5%
- In-class participation: 15%
  Total: 100%

Topic presentations and discussion leading

Each student will make topic presentations and lead the class discussion for assigned topics. Students will indicate their preferences on the first day of class, and with that information the instructor will assign the topics by the second class. Presenters should submit their slides to Carmen by the end of the class in which they present. Each presentation can use the following format:

1. Describe the central theme of the assigned readings and explain in what ways each reading relates to the theme.

2. Provide the main points of each reading. Do not summarize the reading. Instead, focus on theoretical strengths and their practical implications.

3. Provide media examples of the topic, theories, or health issues described in the readings. Using creative means to engage classmates (e.g., activities) is encouraged.

4. Provide your analysis, synthesis, or constructive evaluation of the theory, research, or applications presented in the readings. While each study has limitations, your critique should focus on ways to improve, rather than emphasizing weaknesses only.

5. Promote class engagement with the topic. The discussion leader is responsible for reviewing discussion questions to organize the structure and flow of in-class discussion. Leaders are asked to embrace diverse opinions and highlight the similarities and differences in perspectives and the associated rationale.

Presenters do not need to prepare a separate discussion question for the topic. Grading will assess the degree to which the five components above are addressed.

Discussion questions

Through discussion questions, students will demonstrate their understanding and reflection of the readings. Questions can address theoretical or practical implications of the readings. Quality discussion questions integrate two or more readings, rather than focusing on one part of a single reading only. Furthermore, quality discussion questions analyze, synthesize, and constructively critique the readings with an eye toward improving extant theory, research, or applications.

So that the topic discussion leaders and the rest of the class have about a day to preview them, questions should be posted on Carmen no later than Tuesdays at 5pm for Wednesday classes and by Thursday at 5pm for Friday classes. Each submission of discussion questions will be evaluated by the instructor. If you do not submit a discussion question, you will receive a zero for that portion. Each discussion question is expected to be 150-200 words in length and have a general structure comprising the following:

1. Background description
2. Problem statement
3. Specific questions based on a synthesis of two or more readings
4. Your own perspectives addressing the question

Grading will assess clarity in conceptual understanding and the extent to which new theoretical or applied insight is offered for class. The lowest two scores will be dropped in the computation of the final grade.

Exam

The assignment is designed to help students critically reflect on key literature, make connections across the topics covered, identify gaps in the streams of research discussed, and think about ways to improve future theory and research. The exam will be conducted during one 80-minute class session using a paper-and-pencil/blue book format. The exam will be open book: Students can use handwritten notes or printed materials during the exam, but no phone, tablet, or laptop use is allowed. Sample questions will be provided prior to the exam. Please keep in mind that this assignment asks you to express *your own* ideas and perspectives. Responses must not be developed through consultation with others prior to the exam.

Term paper

Students can propose to write a theory-focused paper or application-focused paper. A hybrid can be fine too but please check with the instructor. Generally doctoral students are expected to write a theory-focused paper in which they analyze and synthesize existing theory and research to propose improvements in theory and research. Master's students can choose to write an application-focused paper in which they connect a theory with a health issue and a specific population and develop plans to use a mediated communication theory-based intervention to address the health issue.

A theory-focused paper can choose to propose an extension of a theory or an integration of two or more theories into a new conceptual framework, on the basis of a critical review and evaluation of existing premises and research. A theory-focused paper can also be a research proposal with a literature review, hypotheses predicting previously unexamined relationships, and a description of design and methods. An application-focused paper can choose to analyze how theory is translated into intervention decisions, including intervention structure and components, or to propose a new theory-based design, such as a new intervention for a given health issue and population. In all cases, a robust review of the literature addressing what has been done and their limitations and constructive ideas for improvement are essential.

All students should submit a one-page term paper proposal. Each proposal should address the following:

1. Statement of problem: theoretical or practical
2. Proposed approach to address the problem
3. Why is your approach useful, novel, or an improvement over existing approaches
4. Theoretical basis of the approach
5. Outline of methodological aspects of the approach

   Application-focused proposals should also include a description of the specific health issue of choice and the population of interest.

Central to your paper should be the concepts of the media/communication and intervention/change, as well as health. If you choose to write a theory focused paper, you should indicate how your conceptual approach fills a void in current knowledge about the role of mediated communication in impacting public health. If you choose to write an application focused paper, you should indicate how your proposed mediated communication program is an advance over existing programs and practices.

Each term paper is expected to be conference presentable. Each paper should have no more than 5000 words not including abstract, references, tables, figures, and appendices. Formatting requirements include the use of size 12 font, double-spacing, one-inch margin all around, and adherence to the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association.

Grading criteria include innovativeness of the core idea, soundness of approach, and contribution to health communication theory/practice.

In class participation

Coming to class is a necessary basis for participation. Students are expected to come to class after having read the assigned readings, reviewed other students' discussion questions, and be prepared to engage in discussion. Evaluation of in-class participation will be provided three times during the semester: after week 4, 9, and 14. Not participating in class discussion will result in a zero point for that portion.

The instructor will evaluate both the quality and quantity of participation. Generally, quality is more important than quantity. Quality of participation is defined as the degree to which it demonstrates the student's understanding of the readings, is relevant to the theory and practice presented in the readings, and helps the class think critically about the readings and the topic of the day. In addition, it is important that everyone considers the basis of their assertions and the presumptions behind them. Rigorous discussion, including disagreement, is based on facts, accurate data, and respect for and openness to truth and different experiences and perspectives.

Grading scale

93–100: A
90–92.9: A-
87–89.9: B+
83–86.9: B
80–82.9: B-
77–79.9: C+
73–76.9: C
70 –72.9: C-

67 –69.9: D+
60 –66.9: D
Below 60: E

Attendance

Attendance is a necessary foundation for class participation. Attendance will be taken every class day, including the presentation days. If you will miss a class, you must email the instructor to explain the reason and provide documentation. Missing two or more classes without a documented valid excuse will result in a lowering of your final grade for this course by a half letter grade for each absence (e.g., A will become A-).

Classroom conduct

Respect for everyone in the classroom, including other students and the instructor, is essential. Rude remarks or behavior negatively affect the classroom experience of not only the recipient but the rest of the class and disrupt learning and teaching. Derogatory comments have no place in this class and will not be tolerated. Everyone is expected to contribute to the learning experience in this course.

Phone use is not allowed during class. Students are not asked to web-search information during class as it distracts them from core learning activities. Incidents including the following disrupt class: phone ringing, texting, checking emails, surfing the web, and two or more late arrivals or early departures without prior notification to the instructor. Each occurrence of these behaviors will result in a reduction of 2.5% from the final total of this class.

Assignment submissions

Assignments must be turned in by the designated date and time. Late work will be graded down 10% for every hour unless an extension has been obtained in advance.

Copyright

The materials used in connection with this course are intended solely for the use of students officially enrolled in the course and for educational purposes associated with the course. Unauthorized use may violate copyright law and institutional policies. Do not copy, retain, or disseminate course materials.

General advice for students

The instructor will be glad to meet you at any point during the semester to discuss course-related matters. If you experience difficulties that negatively affect your grade, I ask that you come see me as soon as possible.

Disability Services

The university strives to maintain a healthy and accessible environment to support student learning in and out of the classroom. 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.

If you are ill and need to miss class, including if you are staying home and away from others while experiencing symptoms of a viral infection or fever, please let me know immediately. In cases where illness interacts with an underlying medical condition, please consult with Student Life Disability Services to request reasonable accommodations. You can connect with them at slds@osu.edu; 614-292-3307; or slds.osu.edu.

Academic Misconduct

Academic integrity is essential to maintaining an environment that fosters excellence in teaching, research, and other educational and scholarly activities. Thus, The Ohio State University and the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM) expect that all students have read and understand the University's Code of Student Conduct, and that all students will complete all academic and scholarly assignments with fairness and honesty. Students must recognize that failure to follow the rules and guidelines established in the University's Code of Student Conduct and this syllabus may constitute Academic Misconduct.

The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3335-23-04) defines academic misconduct as: Any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University or subvert the educational process. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination. Ignorance of the University's Code of Student Conduct is never considered an excuse for academic misconduct, so please review the Code of Student Conduct and, specifically, the sections dealing with academic misconduct.

If an instructor suspects that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, the instructor is obligated by University Rules to report those suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct. If COAM determines that a student violated the University's Code of Student Conduct (i.e., committed academic misconduct), the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in the course and suspension or dismissal from the University.

If students have questions about the above policy or what constitutes academic misconduct in this course, they should contact the instructor.

Artificial Intelligence and Academic Integrity

There has been a significant increase in the popularity and availability of a variety of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, including ChatGPT, Sudowrite, and others. These tools will help shape the future of work, research and technology, but when used in the wrong way, they can stand in conflict with academic integrity at Ohio State.

All students have important obligations under the Code of Student Conduct to complete all academic and scholarly activities with fairness and honesty. Our professional students also have the responsibility to uphold the professional and ethical standards found in their respective academic honor codes. Specifically, students are not to use unauthorized assistance in the laboratory, on field work, in scholarship, or on a course assignment unless such assistance has been authorized specifically by the course instructor. In addition, students are not to submit their work without acknowledging any word-for-word use and/or paraphrasing of writing, ideas or other work that is not your own. These requirements apply to all students undergraduate, graduate, and professional.

To maintain a culture of integrity and respect, these generative AI tools should not be used in the completion of course assignments unless an instructor for a given course specifically authorizes their use. Some instructors may approve of using generative AI tools in the academic setting for specific goals. However, these tools should be used only with the explicit and clear permission of each individual instructor, and then only in the ways allowed by the instructor.

Religious Accommodations

Ohio State has had a longstanding practice of making reasonable academic accommodations for students' religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable law. In 2023, Ohio State updated its practice to align with new state legislation. Under this new provision, students must be in early communication with their instructors regarding any known accommodation requests for religious beliefs and practices, providing notice of specific dates for which they request alternative accommodations within 14 days after the first instructional day of the course. Instructors in turn shall not question the sincerity of a student's religious or spiritual belief system in reviewing such requests and shall keep requests for accommodations confidential.

With sufficient notice, instructors will provide students with reasonable alternative accommodations with regard to examinations and other academic requirements with respect to students' sincerely held religious beliefs and practices by allowing up to three absences each semester for the student to attend or participate in religious activities. Examples of religious accommodations can include, but are not limited to, rescheduling an exam, altering the time of a student's presentation, allowing make-up assignments to substitute for missed class work, or flexibility in due dates or research responsibilities. If concerns arise about a requested accommodation, instructors are to consult their tenure initiating unit head for assistance.

A student's request for time off shall be provided if the student's sincerely held religious belief or practice severely affects the student's ability to take an exam or meet an academic requirement and the student has notified their instructor, in writing during the first 14 days after the course begins, of the date of each absence. Although students are required to provide notice within the first 14 days after a course begins, instructors are strongly encouraged to work with the student to provide a reasonable accommodation if a request is made outside the notice period. A student may not be penalized for an absence approved under this policy.

If students have questions or disputes related to academic accommodations, they should contact their course instructor, and then their department or college office. For questions or to report discrimination or harassment based on religion, individuals should contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office. (Policy: Religious Holidays, Holy Days and Observances)

Intellectual Diversity

Ohio State is committed to fostering a culture of open inquiry and intellectual diversity within the classroom. This course will cover a range of information and may include discussions or debates about controversial issues, beliefs, or policies. Any such discussions and debates are intended to support understanding of the approved curriculum and relevant course objectives rather than promote any specific point of view. Students will be assessed on principles applicable to the field of study and the content covered in the course. Preparing students for citizenship includes helping them develop critical thinking skills that will allow them to reach their own conclusions regarding complex or controversial matters.

Creating an Environment Free from Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Misconduct

The Ohio State University is committed to building and maintaining a community to reflect diversity and to improve opportunities for all. All Buckeyes have the right to be free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct. Ohio State does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, pregnancy (childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery therefrom), race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, academic programs, admission, and employment. Members of the university community also have the right to be free from all forms of sexual misconduct: sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

To report harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct, or retaliation and/or seek confidential and non-confidential resources and supportive measures, contact the Civil Rights Compliance Office:

Online reporting form at http://civilrights.osu.edu/,

Call 614-247-5838 or TTY 614-688-8605,

Or Email civilrights@osu.edu

The university is committed to stopping sexual misconduct, preventing its recurrence, eliminating any hostile environment, and remedying its discriminatory effects. All university employees have reporting responsibilities to the Civil Rights Compliance Office to ensure the university can take appropriate action:

- All university employees, except those exempted by legal privilege of confidentiality or expressly identified as a confidential reporter, have an obligation to report incidents of sexual assault immediately.

- The following employees have an obligation to report all other forms of sexual misconduct as soon as practicable but at most within five workdays of becoming aware of such information: 1. Any human resource professional (HRP); 2. Anyone who supervises faculty, staff, students, or volunteers; 3. Chair/director; and 4. Faculty member.

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 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 24/7 by dialing 988 to reach the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Emergency Information

Weather or other short-term closing
Should in-person classes be canceled, we will meet virtually via CarmenZoom during our regularly scheduled time. I will share any updates via Carmen or email.

Classroom door locks
On the first day of class, we will watch this video explaining door locks and how to use them effectively in the event of an active aggressor situation:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6H_iYx-sac

Course Schedule Overview

Note. The schedule and its components are subject to revision at the instructor's discretion. Students will be notified of any such modifications via Carmen and are responsible for reviewing updates in a timely manner and making any necessary adjustments to their coursework.

Week	Date	Topic
1	1/14	Intro to the course
	1/16	Overview
2	1/21	Theories of campaigns: Development 1
	1/23	Theories of campaigns: Development 2
3	1/28	Theories of campaigns: Evaluation 1
	1/30	Theories of campaigns: Evaluation 2
4	2/4	Limitations of campaigns 1
	2/6	Limitations of campaigns 2
5	2/11	Patterns of effects
	2/13	Stability and change
6	2/18	Term paper proposal presentations & discussion
	2/20	Exam
7	2/25	Individual meetings with the instructor
	2/27	Individual meetings with the instructor
8	3/4	Exposure
	3/6	Health disparities 1
9	3/11	Health disparities 2
	3/13	*Invited speaker 1*
10	3/18	Spring break
	3/20	Spring break
11	3/25	*Invited speaker 2*
	3/27	Culture and health communication interventions
12	4/1	Social media interventions 1
	4/3	Social media interventions 2
13	4/8	AI-based interventions 1
	4/10	AI-based interventions 2
14	4/15	Individual meetings with the instructor
	4/17	Individual meetings with the instructor
15	4/22	Term paper presentations
	4/24	Term paper presentations, wrap-up, paper due