

## **COMM 3332: Risk Communication**

Autumn 2019

Class hours: Wednesdays and Fridays 11:10am-12:30pm

Classroom: Cockins Hall 312

Professor: Hyunyi Cho, PhD

Office: Derby 3026

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Office hours: Wednesdays 12:30-1:00pm, Fridays 10:40-11:10am, and by appointment

### **Course Description and Objectives**

This course is designed to provide students with comprehensive knowledge of risk communication theory and practice. Students will learn theory and principles of risk communication, how to apply the theory and principles into action, and how to evaluate and improve risk communication efforts. The objectives of this course is to help students be able to do the following by the end of the semester:

1. Understand the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of risk communication;
2. Ascertain the theory and principles of effective risk message design;
3. Connect risk communication theory and practice; and
4. Gain hands-on experience in developing and evaluating risk communication messages and programs.

### **Required Readings**

Will be available on Canvas. There is no required book assigned for this class.

### **Suggested Reference Books**

Cho, H., Reimer, T.O., & McComas, K.A. (Eds.). (2015). *The SAGE handbook of risk communication*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cox, R. (2013). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Fischhoff, B., & Kadvany, J. (2011). *Risk: A very short introduction*. New York: Oxford

Witte, K., Meyer, G., & Martell, D. (2001). *Effective health risk messages: A theory-based, step-by-step, how-to guide on developing persuasive communication that works*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

## Course Requirements

### Points Distribution

Requirement	%	Point	Unit
Exams	42%	210	
Exam 1	24%	120	Individual
Exam 2	18%	90	Individual
Term project	33%	165	
Proposal	5%	25	Group
Written final report	15%	75	Group
Final presentation	5%	25	Group
Peer evaluation	8%	40	Individual
In class assignments	15%	75	
Each in class assignment	3%	15	Group
Reflection paper	5%	25	Individual
Class participation	5%	25	Individual
Total	100%	500	

### Grading Scale

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%	E = 0-59%

### Exams

Two exams are scheduled for the semester. See the course schedule for the dates. Exams will cover class lectures, assigned reading materials, and class discussion. Each exam can be any combination of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay type questions.

### Term Project

The term project will be a theory-guided design of a comprehensive risk communication plan. It will include formative research, prototype message design, pretest, and preliminary evaluation plan. Student teams will identify and propose risk communication problems that they want to address and will obtain the instructor's approval prior to beginning the project. A more detailed guideline will be provided in a separate handout later this semester. Overall, work will be evaluated in terms of the degree to which it effectively applies theories of risk communication to addressing real-life problems in risk communication. Detailed guidelines for each subcomponents of the project, including proposal, final report, final presentation, and peer evaluation, will be provided in written form later this semester.

## **In Class Assignments**

Risk communication situations are frequently complex and challenging, requiring critical and informed debate and deliberation. In-class assignments will be for applying risk communication theory to real-life risk communication problem solving. Students will work in groups to apply concepts and develop creative solutions. Reports will be evaluated in terms of analytic accuracy, conceptual soundness, clarity in reporting, and creativity in suggested solutions. Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up as the work is to be done on the basis of lecture, brainstorming with other students in groups, and reporting back to class and discussion in classroom. There will be more than five in-class assignments during the semester and instructor will drop the two with lowest scores or no scores due to absence from your final total for this class. For class logistics and scheduling factors, dates of in-class assignments cannot be announced in advance.

## **Reflection Paper**

Each student will submit a 450-word reflection paper at the end of the semester. The goal of this assignment is to help students analyze what they have learned and plan on how they will use the knowledge in future research and/or action. Soundness of conceptualization, authenticity of reflection, and cogency and clarity of writing will be evaluated. A detailed guideline will be provided later this semester.

## **Class Participation**

Students are expected to come to class after having read the assigned materials and being prepared for discussion. The instructor will evaluate the quality and quantity of participation. 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 stimulates interests in the topic presented in the readings. Quality is more important than quantity of class participation. Asking thoughtful questions and providing constructive suggestions for classmates' presentations are important forms of class participation.

## **Attendance**

Attendance is the fundamental foundation of success in this class. Students are expected to come to class each day. Students are responsible for the information missed during an absence. Lecture notes will not be available from the instructor. You are asked to exchange email addresses and phone numbers with at least two classmates so that when you miss a class, arrangements can be made with your classmates to obtain missed information.

## Course Policies

### Classroom Conduct

Respect for everyone in classroom, including other students and instructor, is essential. Rude remarks or behavior negatively affect the classroom experience of not only the recipient but the rest of class and disrupt learning and teaching. Students are asked to mute phone, take off headset, and put them in pocket or bag away from desk for each class. For each occurrence of the following incidences, 10 points will be subtracted from your final total for this class:

- Phone ringing;
- Texting (receiving or sending);
- Checking, receiving, or sending emails on any device;
- Any other activities that disrupt class, teaching, and learning

### Notetaking and electronic device use

Students are asked to take notes by hand. Use of laptop, tablet, or phone is not allowed. Use of these devices for non-class related purposes distract your and other students' learning experience and the instructor's teaching. Moreover, research indicates that students learn better when they are actively engaged in class through note-taking by hand (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014).

Mueller, P.A. & Oppenheimer, D.A. (2014). The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking. *Psychological Sciences*, 25, 1159-1168.

### Powerpoint presentation materials

Copies of the instructor's Powerpoint presentation in class will not be given to students. As stated elsewhere in this syllabus, students are expected to come to class and take an active role in their learning. Therefore, this policy is to promote active learning during class and to prevent misuse or distribution of the lecture materials.

### Assignment Submission

Assignments are due by the beginning of class on each due date. Late work will be graded down 10% per 24 hours. A late penalty begins immediately after the instructor has collected the assignments. Keep in mind that for group assignments, all members are penalized for late work even if it is one member's neglect of responsibility.

### Makeup Exam

A makeup exam will not be given unless the following three conditions are met: (1) The excuse is valid; (2) the excuse is made in advance; and (3) the excuse is documented. Under these conditions, authenticated written documents must be provided to the instructor.

## **School, College, and University Policies, Statements, and Resource Information**

### **Accessibility accommodations for students with disabilities**

#### **Requesting accommodations**

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know via email immediately so that we can privately discuss options. You are also welcome to register with Student Life Disability Services to establish reasonable accommodations. 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. 12th Avenue.

#### **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/>

#### **Student Academic Services**

Arts and Sciences Advising and Academic Services' website provides support for student academic success. Information on advising issues such as tutoring, transfer credits, academic standing, and contact information for Arts and Sciences advisors can be obtained through this website. The site is: <http://advising.osu.edu/welcome.shtml>

#### **Student Services**

The Student Service Center assists with financial aid matters, tuition and fee payments. Please see their site at: <http://ssc.osu.edu>

#### **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.

#### **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)

### **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.

### **Please Take Care of Yourself: 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 are or someone you know is 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](http://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.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

### **Instructor's General Advice for Students**

I will be glad to meet you at any point during the semester to discuss course-related or any other matters that affect your performance in this class. If you experience difficulties that negatively affect your grade, I ask that you come see me as soon as possible during office hours or by setting up an appointment.

### Course Schedule

**Notes:** This schedule is subject to revision under extenuating circumstances and at instructor's discretion. Additional readings can be assigned as deemed useful.

Wk	Date	Topic	Reading assignment
1	8/21	Introduction to the course	
	8/23	Historical perspective	Cho et al., 2014
2	8/28	Historical perspective	
	8/30	Risk communication theories	Cho & Witte, 2003, 2005
3	9/4	Risk communication theories	
	9/6	Risk perceptions	Sandman, 1988; Slovic, 1987
4	9/11	Risk perceptions	
	9/13	Affect and emotions	Lerner, 2003; Sinaceur, 2005
5	9/18	Affect and emotions	
	9/20	Social factors	Cho, 2006
6	9/25	Social factors Term project proposal due	
	9/27	Review	
7	10/2	Exam 1	
	10/5	Group meeting with instructor	In classroom
8	10/9	Group meeting with instructor	In classroom
	10/11	Autumn break: No class	
9	10/16	Risk message design and evaluation	
	10/18	Risk and stigma	Smith, 2007
10	10/23	Risk and trust	Siegrist et al., 2000
	10/25	Risk misinformation in media	Kata, 2010
11	10/30	Correcting risk misinformation	Nyhan & Reifler, 2015
	11/1	Societal risk	Cho & Kuang, 2014
12	11/6	Audience factors	Flynn, 1994; Weber, 1998; Mayfield, 2017
	11/8	Review	
13	11/13	Exam 2	
	11/15	Group meeting with instructor	In classroom
14	11/20	Group meeting with instructor	In classroom
	11/22	Term project presentations	
15	11/27	Thanksgiving break: No class	
	11/29	Thanksgiving break: No class	
16	12/4	<i>Last day of class</i>	
		Term project presentations	
		Term project written report due	
		Peer evaluation due	
	12/6	Reflection paper due by 11:10am	