

COMM 304 Section 001
Foundations of Health Communication
Fall, 2021

Course Overview

Health communication is about improving health outcomes by encouraging behavioral modification and/or social change. It is increasingly considered an integral part of most community and public health interventions. With the audience always at the core of each health communication intervention, models, theories and strategies are ultimately employed to: 1) reach "people's hearts;" 2) secure their involvement in the health issue and, most importantly, its solutions and, 3) support and facilitate their journey on a path to better health. With such a diverse society, reaching these goals is more complex and multi-faceted than ever.

So, why learn health communication through theoretical lenses? It is important to understand the operative frameworks through which health communication practice takes shape to interrogate underlying assumptions. It is through this approach that we will critically discern how to achieve the three previously mentioned goals. During our course, we will survey health communication theories, models, processes, strategies, and techniques as applied to public/community health, health disparities, and medical inequities and related to a variety of issues, such as perceptions of health, provider-patient relationships, health organizations, health campaigns, intercultural issues, and the use of new communication technologies.

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Define health communication and its role in promoting health and improving behaviors.
2. Identify strategies, techniques, variables, processes of health communication theories and practice
3. Analyze the application of health communication in health promotion
4. Critique health communication applicability to health disparities, health inequities, and health social justice
5. Describe the strengths and limitations of health communication for use across communication channels and contexts including digital media, face-to-face, community health, and public health.
6. Apply a health communication theory to targeted intervention development
7. Identify, target, create and evaluate health communication materials designed to improve the health of specific intended populations.

Required Texts

Thompson, R. L & Schulz, P. J. (2021). *Health Communication Theory*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell Publishing.

Instructor: Jennifer R. Warren, Ph.D, CCPHC, CDIL, (all/everyone). Assistant Professor, Dept of Communication, African/African American Studies, Women and Gender Studies Program, jwarre20@gmu.edu (I am working remotely from home this semester due to the pandemic). **Please call me Dr. Ma'at (preferred name Akila Ka Ma'at). I keep the Dr. because it cost me house in loans to achieve this status ☺. I will address you by your preferred name too.** No explanation needed. My pronouns are all and everyone. Partly due to my resistance to the 'he' in 'them' and 'they'.

Office Hours: Please contact me anytime via email if you have any questions or requests to share with me (jwarre20@gmu.edu) and I will do my best to respond within 24 hours. In addition, I am arranging to be available live on **Wednesdays from 12-1pm** (before our class meeting) **if you want to connect via Zoom. I am also glad to make appointments to meet with you via Zoom or phone (if needed).** Just email me and we can set up a meeting.

Class Time and Online Education Information: Our class will meet online on **Mondays and Wednesdays 1:30-2:45PM** using Zoom, which will be available via Blackboard. I will enable early log on to each class minutes before the class start time. (I encourage you to log on 15 or 20 minutes early to make sure everything is working for you online and so you can connect informally with me and your classmates before our class begins.

This is a nice way for us to speak informally and provide mutual support. You will need to have access to either a networked (internet access) desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone, with speakers (or headset) so you can hear the class, a camera (so we can see you – this is important), and a microphone (so you can speak with the class). If for any reason the internet link is not working for you or you do not have computer access, there will be an emergency telephone access number listed for each class on our class Blackboard site that will allow you to connect to the class by phone. **I will appreciate it if you would please keep your microphones on mute until it is time for you to speak** (to minimize any annoying feedback noise that can happen when there are too many microphones on at once).

When you need to share a video or other document from your computer, please let me know and I will provide you with presenter access control. Please also let me know if you have any problems with connecting to our online class. Online classes can be an adventure for many of us. **Please communicate actively and responsively during our online classes to create the high level of immediacy that is normally achieved during in-person classes.**

Additional Resources

PDFs and Websites'

1. School of Public Health (2016) Social Justice, Public Health. Boston University. <https://www.bu.edu/sph/news/articles/2016/social-justice-public-health/>
2. Wotton L & Binagwaho, A (2020). Communicating Public Health and Social Justice. Project Syndicate. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/communication-uk-rwanda-covid19-crisis-by-laura-wotton-and-agnes-binagwaho-2020-08>
3. Communicating Public Health and Social Justice (Health National Cancer Institute. (2004). Making health communication programs work [“The Pink Book”]. <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/health-communication/pink-book.pdf> (PDF version)
4. National Cancer Institute. (2005). Theory at a Glance [“Theory at Glance”]. <http://www.cancer.gov/PDF/481f5d53-63df-41bc-bfaf-5aa48ee1da4d/TAAG3.pdf>
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012). CDC’s Guide to Writing for Social Media. <http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/GuidetoWritingforSocialMedia.pdf>
6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). The Health Communicator’s Social Media Toolkit. http://www.cdc.gov/socialmedia/Tools/guidelines/pdf/SocialMediaToolkit_BM.pdf
7. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2009). Simply Put: A guide for creating easy-to-understand materials (3rd. Ed.). http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/pdf/Simply_Put.pdf
8. CDCynergy. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/CDCynergy/index.html>
9. Health Communication & Social Marketing. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/>
10. Health Literacy. <http://www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy/>
11. Health Communication, Health Literacy, and e-health. <http://health.gov/communication/>

Videos

1. Health Equity Institute (20-14) What is Health Equity? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZd4no4gZnc>
2. American Cancer Society (2020). Divergent Paths: A Health Equity Story. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8cOM7cIMrv4>

3. Johns Hopkins Medicine (2017). Minority Health Disparities. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v1VZKZNXyBA>
4. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2009). Empowering Community Health. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HFDQUZ4ewjo>
5. Social Determinants of Health (2020). Psych Hub. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=17jeXGbKITQ>
6. What is Public Health (2017). Let's Learn Public Health. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_eWESXTnic

Assignments

Attendance/Participation: Students are expected to attend class on a regular basis and to be prepared to engage in virtual discussions/exercises based on the required readings, class topics, and on additional prompts. Attendance will be taken each class period. Degree and quality of participation will be factored into this grade.

Discussion Posts: Each week discussion question/prompt based on the weekly reading(s) will be posted to the discussion board of our course Blackboard page (located under "Discussion Board" on our course Blackboard page). The goal is to connect what you are learning to the world around us, or the communities in which we live, work, learn, and play. Students are required to respond to two posts. Basic directions below to be discussed further in class.

Initial Discussion Post

Each student is expected to post a substantive response (e.g., main idea, supporting points, conclusion, grammatically correct, no typos) to ONE of the weekly discussion questions/prompts. The must be no more than 250 words max (175 min). The response must also include a question for further thought or point of reflection.

Each post must have at least one in-text reference cited in the response and listed under the heading 'References'. The heading 'References' and in-text citation(s) are not part of the word count. The in-text citation and listing (under References) must conform to APA standards.

All discussion responses must be posted by 11:59 p.m. on the night of the due date (see schedule below) via the discussion board. NO CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN TO RESPONSES AFTER 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Each student should create a new discussion thread when responding to the questions/prompts. There will be 10 discussion post assignments due throughout the semester.

Discussion Response Posts

Each student must also respond one post from your classmates. Response posts are 150 word minimum, no max. These post must reference and reflect on or expand on a point, idea, or question from your classmate's post (e.g., main idea, supporting points, conclusion, grammatically correct, no typos). No references required. However, you can draw on additional sources and cite them in the response post.

All response posts are by 11:59 p.m. on the night of the due date (see schedule below) via the discussion board. NO CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN TO RESPONSES AFTER 11:59 p.m. on the due date. Make sure you 'reply' to the student's post instead of 'starting a new discussion thread'. There will be 10 response post assignments due throughout the semester.

Health Communication Research Paper: This major paper (or other approved medium) is to assess your grasp of the material. The paper posits a clearly delineated health disparity or inequity and a segment of the population that is impacted by this disparity or inequity. Conduct a literature review of current research on this disparity or inequity and the population affected. Then choose a health communication theory that is of interest to you or appears to have relevance to health issue. Conduct a literature review of current research on the application (e.g., intervention, evaluation) of the theory to the disparity or inequity and target population (our book cites many studies). Summarize the findings of the literature reviews, discuss the theory's application to the disparity or inequity and impacted population, and critique the strengths and merits of the health communication theory in advancing understanding of the reduction of the health disparity or inequity or in promoting health social justice. We will work on this paper throughout the semester.

This 7 – 10-page maximum paper must be typed (12-point font), APA Style 6th ed., double-spaced, and it should include a reference page for all of the research that is cited. Seven references minimum (e.g., 3 for health issue, 3 for theory, 1 for critique) and no maximum. All citations in the reference list must have an accompanying in-text citation within the body of the paper.

Health Communication Intervention Presentation: Ideally this presentation is to expand on the Health Communication Research Paper and activate message design skills, students will be divided into teams to develop a health communication intervention based on one health communication theory. I will divide the class into groups. Each group must identify and research a current health disparity, inequity, or health social justice issue affecting a clearly delineated population George Mason University students or underserved population that would benefit from a health communication intervention or any interesting health topic that is approved by Dr. Ma’at. Each group will need to discuss ways to ameliorate the problem, and develop theory-based intervention material(s). Toward the end of the semester, each group will present their intervention idea to the class. Students will be graded on the quality of the intervention and the presentation itself. We will discuss this further in class. We will work on the intervention throughout the semester.

Grading

The following point system will be used to evaluate your performance in this class.

Attendance/Participation	50 Points
Discussion Posts	100 Points (10 points each)
Response Posts	50 Points (5 points each)
Research Paper	100 Points
Intervention Presentation	100 Points
<u>Comprehensive Final Exam</u>	<u>100 Points</u>
Total	500 Points

2. Your letter grade will be based on the standard percentages of 90 –100% = A (450 – 500); 80 – 89% = B (400 – 449); 70 – 79% = C (350 – 399); 60 – 69% = D (300 – 349); and 59% and below (299 or less) = F

General Class Policies

Diversity and Inclusion

It is important for each of us to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

Gender Identity

Gender identity and pronoun use: If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. I use ‘all/everyone’ for myself and you may address me as “Dr. Ma’at” in email and verbally.

Anti-Racism Statement

An anti-racist approach to health communication acknowledges the ways that individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural manifestations of racism against Black,^[1] Indigenous, and other people of color contribute to inequality and injustice with the field of health communication and as health communication is practice in communities and other settings. We acknowledge that an anti-racism approach is an active and ongoing, long-term process. In all our efforts, we

uphold a commitment to creating honest, respectful, supportive, and healing spaces where members of our community can meaningfully dialogue and learn from each other's lived experiences for the betterment of our entire community.

To be anti-racist means:

- To make constant, conscious decisions to interrupt racism and cultivate equity, inclusion, and justice for people of all racial backgrounds, and in particular those from Black communities and other communities of color, who are most likely to bear the direct and indirect costs of systems of White supremacy^[iii];
- To interrogate histories of White supremacy and White-dominant culture^[iiii], and to examine the ways in which these histories have impacted our individual beliefs, our interpersonal relationships, our institutional and structural policies and processes, and our entire society as well as how we approach and do health communication;
- To make a commitment to being responsible for our own relationships to, and actions within, systems of racism and White supremacy; and
- To cultivate a practice of self-awareness and self-reflection that allows us to critically evaluate our own role in upholding White supremacy and identify the ways we can interrupt cycles of racism at the individual, interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels within the field of health communication, our communities, and lives.

We acknowledge that an anti-racism approach must be intersectional, looking at how race, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity, dis/ability, or other aspects of identity, as well as class exploitation, overlap to inform experiences with oppression or privilege, both interpersonally and systematically. Ultimately, an anti-racism approach recognizes every person's inherent human dignity and entitlement to the economic, social, cultural, and political rights and freedoms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as other international human rights instruments.

We believe that the work of anti-racism must be both a collective and individual effort, and that in cultivating an anti-racist approach to research, scholarship, and practice, you will build a skillset rooted in principles of equity, inclusion, and justice that they will carry with them throughout your lives.

Possible Changes to the Syllabus

As the instructor, I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus. Students will be given ample notice regarding any major changes to the course plan. Of course, it is my goal that any changes are agreed upon by our class community.

Zoom Class Sessions

Throughout the Zoom class session, all students must be viewable and microphones off until discussion starts or students have questions during the class. When you want to ask a question, please try to use the 'hand wave' icon or send a message in the chat. If you are not viewable via Zoom video throughout the class session, it will be an absence. (Emergencies are understandable).

No Cell Phone Use During Zoon Class Session

Please make sure to turn off your cell phones before class. Text messaging during class is an extremely obnoxious and disrespectful behavior and will result in immediate rejection from class +once detected. Use of laptop computers in the classroom is allowed only for the purpose of taking lecture notes.

Communication about Grades

If you have a question or a concern with a grade given in the course, you should **contact me within three class periods of receiving your grade**. I will not review grades re-submitted after this time period has elapsed.

Late Assignments

Assignments turned in late will be penalized by deducting 5% from the total points for each day it is late. Assignments will no longer be accepted after 3 days past the due date.

Early Read of Assignments

As a class policy, I do not read a student's assignment until he or she formally submits it for grading. I would be happy to address any specific concerns or questions regarding the assignment prior to the submission.

Email Use

Email is a great way to stay in touch even after school hours. I encourage you to use email to communicate with me. However, when you email me, please make sure that you identify yourself clearly using both your **full name** and the **course number**. **Please be aware that I only have your GMU email address. All my emails will be sent to your GMU account. It is your responsibility to check your email on regular basis and make sure it is working!**

Honor Code

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

As in many classes, a number of projects in this class are designed to be completed within your study group. With collaborative work, names of all the participants should appear on the work. Collaborative projects may be divided up so that individual group members complete portions of the whole, provided that group members take sufficient steps to ensure that the pieces conceptually fit together in the end product. Other projects are designed to be undertaken independently. In the latter case, you may discuss your ideas with others and conference with peers on drafts of the work; however, it is not appropriate to give your paper to someone else to revise. You are responsible for making certain that there is no question that the work you hand in is your own. If only your name appears on an assignment, your professor has the right to expect that you have done the work yourself, fully and independently.

Mason is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity (<https://oai.gmu.edu/>) for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Incompletes or Withdrawals

The situations in which an incomplete can be given are specified very clearly in the university catalogue, which indicates that such a grade may be given to a student who is passing a course but who may be unable to complete scheduled course work for a cause beyond reasonable control. Along the same lines, the policies regulating withdrawal are clearly specified in the catalogue, but they are granted ONLY for non-academic reasons.

Reasonable Accommodation

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to upholding the letter and spirit of the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. Under the administration of University Life, Disability Services implements and coordinates reasonable accommodations and disability-related services that afford equal access to university programs and activities. Students can begin the registration process with Disability Services at any time during their enrollment at George Mason University. If you are seeking accommodations, please visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474

The GMU Writing Center

The Writing Center provides free tutorial sessions for all students needing help with any writing project from freshman essays to scholarly publications. It is best to make an appointment to ensure seeing a Writing Center consultant at a specific time; however, walk-ins will be accepted if there are openings. The GMU Writing Center is located at UWC: Robinson A114. Phone: 703-993-1200. Web page: www.gmu.edu/departments/writingcenter

Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

DATE	Topic	READINGS/INFO	WRITTEN WORK
8/23	Low Stress Virtual Class Drop By		Join Zoom Meeting https://us06web.zoom.us/j/5780348102?pwd=ThsV3pxMjr2ZlJ3LytvaHA2UmdBQT09 Meeting ID: 578 034 8102 Passcode: 123
8/25	Course Introduction	Chapter 1	Introduction Discussion Post #1 Due by 11:59pm No Response Due
8/30	Communication and Health	Chapter 3	
Perspective I: Society, Culture, and Individuals			
9/1	Social Justice, Health Inequity, Health Disparities	Assigned Readings	Discussion Post #2 Due by 11:59pm Response due 9/3 by 11:59pm
9/6	No Class		
9/8	Individual & Cultural Perspectives	Chapter 2 & 14	
9/13	Social Psychological Perspectives	Chapter 11	
9/15	Discussion & Application (Discussion of Research Paper, Presentations)		Discussion Post #3 Due by 11:59pm Response due 9/17 by 11:59pm
Perspective II: Health Communication in Context			
9/20	Interpersonal Perspectives	Chapter 4	Discussion Post #4 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 9/22 by 11:59pm
9/22	Family Perspectives	Chapter 5	Topic Proposal for Research Paper Due by 11:59pm
9/27	Provider-Patient Perspectives	Chapter 6	
9/29	Digital Media Perspectives	Chapter 15	
10/4	Discussion & Application		Discussion Post #5 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 10/1 by 11:59pm
Perspective III: Influence and Context			
10/6	Health Behavior Perspectives	Chapter 9	
10/11	No Class		Class on 10/12 Instead as per GMU
10/13	Community/Public Health	Assigned Readings	Intervention Topic Discussion Post #6 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 10/18 by 11:59pm
10/18	Community/Public Health/ Health Systems	Assigned Readings	Outline of Research Paper Due by 11:59pm
Perspective IV: Message Design			
10/25	Channels & Message Design	Assigned Readings	Discussion Post #7 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 10/28 by 11:59pm
10/20	Break Out Working Groups for Intervention Project		Intervention Topic Proposal Paper Due by

			11:59pm in Assignments
10/27	Information-Processing and Cognition	Chapter 7	Discussion Post #8 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 11/2 by 11:59pm
11/1	Using Theory and Message Design	Assigned Readings	
11/3	Break Out Working Groups for Intervention Project	During Class	Intervention Specs Due by 11:59pm
11/8	Discussion & Application		Discussion Post #9 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 11/11 by 11:59pm
Perspective V: Let's Get it Done with Mastery!			
11/10	Break Out Working Groups for Intervention Project	During Class	Draft of Research Paper Due by 11:59pm
11/15	One-on-One Meetings Research Paper <i>Zoom or Phone</i>	Please provide me with the most current draft of your paper.	
11/17	One-on-One Meetings Research Paper <i>Zoom or Phone</i>	Please provide me with the most current draft of your paper.	
11/22	Break Out Working Groups for Intervention Project	During Class	Reflection Discussion Post #10 Due by 11:59pm Response Due 11/23 by 11:59pm
11/24-11/28	Fall Break		
11/29	Presentations		Presentation Due During Class
12/1	Exam Review		
12/8	Comprehensive Final Exam		
12/15			Health Comm. Research Paper Due by 11:59 p.m. on Blackboard (LAST DAY) <i>You can submit this paper on an earlier date</i>