



**HEA 351 – Health Communications**  
**Spring 2004**

**Days/Time:** TTH 2:00 – 3:15 pm

**Room:** Trask 119

**Instructor:** Dr. Mike Perko, Ph.D., CHES

**Office:** Hanover 201

**Office Hours:** M – 10:00 am – 11:00 am, 2:00 pm – 3:00 pm, TTH – 10:00 am – 11:00 am,  
F – By appt.

**Phone:** 962-3258

**E-mail:** Perkom@uncwil.edu

**Webpage** [www.uncwil.edu/people/perkom](http://www.uncwil.edu/people/perkom)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Introduction to the design of effective health communication strategies including retrieval, management and utilization of emerging technologies. Students will develop basic health communication literacy; use of theory to design messages; consumer driven –vs– public service messages, and review of presentation graphic skills (i.e.; PowerPoint). This course will examine the use and effectiveness of mass media to both report the news about health and to promote changes or actions in health-related areas. Students will be exposed to media health messages regarding their objectivity and the extent to which they are comprehensive. Additionally, students will develop an appreciation of the complex ethical, legal and academic issues in health communications.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

After completion of the course the students shall be able to:

1. Investigate the strategic use of health communication media in message development.
2. Examine the role of health professionals in achieving public health objectives via communication.
3. Describe the role of social marketing in health communications.
4. Critique health messages from a variety of sources and mediums.
5. Describe ethical and other issues in health communication.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **1. Health Communication:**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines health communication as "the study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual and community decisions that enhance health." Within the academic community, it is often interpreted as "the art and technique of informing, influencing and motivating individual, institutional, and public audiences about important health issues. Its scope includes disease prevention, health promotion, health care policy, and business, as well as enhancement of the quality of life and health of individuals within the community. (Ratzan, S.C., ed. Health Communication, Challenges for the 21st century. Special issue. American Behavioral Scientist 38(2), 1994.)

**2. Bottom line** – Can we develop messages about health that will make people take action and change their lifestyle? Can we use the same principles that advertisers like Nike and McDonalds use to sell their products? Yes! Not only is it being done but it is a rapidly growing field.



### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Regular class attendance is essential. Videos and guest speakers will be utilized when possible to supplement the instructor's lectures. If you are absent it will be very difficult and sometimes impossible to make-up material covered in class. Students are responsible for all materials presented in class.
2. Complete any reading assignments or otherwise **prior** to attending class.
3. Complete any written assignments by due dates. Points will be deducted for late assignments.

### **Grading and Assignments:**

- 50% Attendance
- 15% readings and reaction papers
- 35% Team PSA

### **Attendance (50%):**

My hope is that this course will allow you to explore areas of interest in health and the way health is communicated. Without your attendance however, the class cannot function. Therefore, the most important thing you can do for yourself and your colleagues is to be here.

### **Readings (15%):**

Following selected reading assignments and discussions, students may be asked to write a 1-2 page reaction/critique on the information presented. Alternatively, students may be asked to critique or analyze a particular article, video, or guest speaker.

### Team PSA (35%);

Design and present to the class a Public Service Announcement (PSA) that deals with any health-related topic. You will work as part of a team. The concept, medium chosen, and presentation format is up to you. Each group will present to the class the *process* that they went through, as well as presenting. You will follow the "Making Health Communications Work" planning model found at [www.nci.gov](http://www.nci.gov).

## **Class Meeting Schedule**

### Date Topic

All topics subjects to change

- |       |      |  |
|-------|------|--|
| Jan.  | 8 –  | Course outline   |
|       | 13 – | No class (can you believe it? Nice.)                                   |
|       | 15 – | Get to know each other.  |
|       | 20 – | History of Health Communications                                       |
|       | 22 – | Media #1 – is going online for health info on the line?                |
|       | 27 – | NCI Health Communications Planning Wheel                               |
|       | 29 – | Public Service Announcements (PSA's)                                   |
| Feb.  | 3–   | PSA teams meet in class  |
|       | 5 –  | Us -vs- Them: What we are up against in terms of advertising           |
|       | 10 – | Writing a press release  |
|       | 12 – | Behavior change theory in Health Communication                         |
|       | 17 – | PPD  |
|       | 19 – | Death in the West – The Rise and Fall of the Marlboro Man              |
|       | 24–  | Social Marketing   |
|       | 26 – | "This is your brain on drugs" Just Say No –vs– Harm Reduction messages |
| March | 2 –  | Work on PSA's in class   |
|       | 4 –  | Work on PSA's out of class   |

- 9 – Spring Break
  - 11 – Spring Break
  - 16 – PPD (No class, see you Thursday)
  - 18 – Andrea Carson
  - 23 – Tailored messages
  - 25 – Alternative health communication
  - 30 – PPD
- April
- 1 – PPD
  - 6 – **PSA presentations begin**
  - 8 – Easter Break
  - 13 – Dr. Dan Johnson – Virtual Buddies – PSA presentations
  - 15 – Ethical considerations in health communications – PSA presentations
  - 20 – Media Advocacy – PSA presentations
  - 22 – PSA presentations