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,  
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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
- 35% Team PSA
- 15% readings and reaction papers

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.

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