COURSE OUTLINE
New York City College of Technology
City University of New York
Humanities Department

COURSE CODE: COM 2403
TITLE: Health Communication
Hours and Credits for Lecture: 3 hours, 3 credits
Pathways: Individual and Society
Course Pre-requisite: COM 1330 Public Speaking
Writing Intensive (WI)
Hybrid (Half in-person, half online)

Course Description:
The study and practice of communication as it relates to health professionals and patient outcomes.
Topics include provider-patient interaction, team communication, and the diffusion of health information through public health campaigns. Students learn the basics of clear, purposeful and compassionate communication across multiple channels, to reduce errors and provide better health care delivery.

Introducing Health Communication:
Health communication refers to human interactions that influence health and wellness outcomes. Communication is at the center of providing patient-centered care. Medical schools often have a communication component for training the next generations of health care workers and job descriptions require strong communication skills. The extent to which expectancies can shape outcomes requires healing professionals to express hope and empathy while administering treatments, using all available communication modalities to create a continuum of care for patients as they move between providers and specialties. This class co-creates a definition for health communication that is inclusive of many diverse cultures and communities of practice. From patient-provider communication, to creating social marketing campaigns, and to communication with emergency responders—Health Communication emerges as an umbrella term that in-corporates a wide variety of professional practices. The class involves doing close observation and detailed description of health care settings, critical analysis of news stories, and drawing on our own experiences with health and illness.

Topics we cover:
- The determining role that communication plays in health outcomes
- Communication across healthcare professions
- Health marketing, emergency and risk communication, and other communication professions
- How expectancies can shape outcomes in health care
- Differences in medical and narrative rationalities
- Medical specialization and the need for common ground
- Plain language initiatives and problems with jargon
- Disease surveillance in epidemiology & communication
- Survey of electronic communication platforms (EHR, CPOE, etc.)
- Training and certification opportunities
- Opportunities for multilingual speakers in health care professions
Course Objectives:
- To become better communicators with patients, clients and other health care professionals
- To communicate successfully, across communication channels (face-to-face, electronic, etc.).
- To identify structural factors that foster and inhibit communication in health care contexts
- To consider the historical and cultural construction of health and wellness
- To learn about the constitutive role that communication plays in behavioral medicine
- To use participation-observation and media analysis to become keen observers and listeners
- To employ narrative and writing in the “first person” to welcome our own experiences about health
- To foster a friendly environment for peer collaboration and interdisciplinary teams
- To co-create a role for health communication that addresses an on-going national healthcare crisis

Textbook:

Other required reading materials, podcasts and videos posted on the course Blackboard site (Bb) by the Instructor and students of this course. These online resources are also helpful:

Communication Strategies is a primer for participating in an online Discussion Board.
Netiquette is a great resource about being polite online and in emails.
Pub Med is a database of medical articles that are available to the public.
Pew Research Center does public opinion research.

Technology Support:
This is a hybrid course, so we meet in person and online. iTec is the name of the Office at City Tech that supports students with their technology needs. Here are some important contact details for iTec:

Office Location: Room G601
General Phone: (718)-254-8565
Email: itec@citytech.cuny.edu
Monday – Thursday 8:30am - 9:00pm
Friday 9:00am - 7:00pm
CLOSED Saturday & Sunday
Website: http://websupport1.citytech.cuny.edu/index.html

iTec also offers student workshops on Email, Blackboard, ePortfolios and other topics. Please see http://websupport1.citytech.cuny.edu/studentworkshops.html

Description of Assignments:
Weekly Reading Responses: Every week, you post a typed response (in Microsoft Word format) to the weekly readings (one page, max) on Blackboard. The purpose of these responses is to summarize as well as to offer a critical opinion of the weekly readings. The reading response should address all of the readings for the week, not just one. Try to make connections across the readings and feel free to pose questions that the readings raise as well. You post these responses each week for evaluation so please be
sure to proofread and revise accordingly. Spelling and grammar mistakes detract from your grade. You can post your Weekly Reading Responses by going to Blackboard and clicking on the ‘Discussions’ link on Blackboard.

In-class personal narrative: In addition to being (aspiring) health professionals, we are also clients and consumers of health care products and procedures. During some class meetings, a writing prompt is displayed and then we take ten minutes or so to write an answer. These writings are not graded, but hold onto them all because you must include at least one of them (revised) in your final portfolio at the end of the term. The in-class personal narrative is “stream of consciousness” --meaning spontaneous and impressionistic. While social-scientific prose is written in the third person in an attempt to hide bias, this assignment welcomes your own personal experience. Please feel free to write about your own experience, but remember your right to privacy as well. If you don’t feel comfortable sharing personal details, there are other forms of writing that I would be glad to suggest. The handwritten in-class personal narratives are ‘first drafts’ so spelling and grammar are of secondary importance. Instead, I want us to practice our story-telling skills and connect to feelings as well as intellect. After we are finished, volunteers read their narrative out loud, or summarize it extemporaneously. Others are encouraged to relate their own experiences to what was shared. Even if you cannot relate to the specific content, try to connect to the feelings that are being expressed.

Blackboard Discussion Board: In the internet age, Health Communication often takes place in an electronic realm, and in this course, we use Blackboard and Open Lab to post assignments and hold discussions about Health Communication. Each week you post, at minimum, one Discussion Thread and three responses to other’s threads) on the Blackboard Discussion Board. One of the advantages of communicating online is that users can post links to news stories, videos and other rich-multimedia sites on the World Wide Web. The Discussion Board is “asynchronous”: you can log in, post and reply at any time of the day or night.

FINAL ASSIGNMENTS
We choose final assignments about mid-term and work on them in the second half of the course. The final project is a chance to communicate something health-related. You may choose a topic that you already are engaged in or a new research topic that fascinates you. All final assignments require research and citations. Each choice requires a typed final paper (to be uploaded on Blackboard) as well as an in-class presentation. You have a choice for your final assignment. Please choose only one of the four choices below:

1. **Analysis of news story:** Find a recent news article relevant to the subject matter of Health Communication. After reading it, conduct more research on the topic and prepare an essay that clearly summarizes the issue and present your own viewpoint. Your presentation should include a succinct summary of the main ideas in the article, an explanation of how you connect the article to course material, and a critique or evaluative response to the article. I also encourage you to pose a few discussion questions to the class. (5 to 6 typed pages & 5 to 10 minute in-class presentation.)

2. **Observation Report of a Healthcare Setting:** This assignment involves an (at-least) one-hour observation, note-taking and write-up of a healthcare setting. Participant-observation involves
immersing yourself in a setting, paying close attention to what is happening, taking notes and asking questions. Your descriptions should be naturalistic, i.e. they should describe what you see and hear in detail. Try to use rich descriptions that “paint a mental picture” for the audience. Your presentation should include rich, vivid details of your observation and interaction and an explanation of how you connect the participant-observation report to the course. I also encourage you to pose a few discussion questions to the class. (5 to 6 typed pages & 5 to 10 minute in-class presentation).

3. **Design a Health Campaign:** This assignment gives you the chance to design a strategic intervention for some kind of health issue. For COMD and PTW students, this is an opportunity to use your design and writing skills to make a print ad, fact sheet, audio or video spot, or social media campaign. Your media work (PowerPoint, audio-visual recording, poster, etc.) must be accompanied by a rationale where you explain your methodology and how the evidence base (i.e. what we know about what works) supports your approach. During your presentation, you should try to persuade us to modify our behavior in some way according to the campaign. (A multi-media work with a 2-5 typed rationale & 5 to 10 minute in-class presentation.)

4. **Student’s Choice:** Perhaps you have a topic that you are interested in, but it does not exactly fit with the other two assignments above. Here is your chance to do something different. I could see perhaps:
   a) A technical research paper that you would like to communicate to a general audience
   b) A skit or a drama that acts out the issues of provider/patient communication
   c) A recounting of some event in the history of medicine and how it is significant for health communication
   d) Your choice….?
   (5 to 6 typed pages & 5 to 10 minute in-class presentation. If you elect to do the “student’s choice” please run it by me beforehand and I’ll offer some direction.)

**NOTE:** a one-page description of your final project due mid-term.

**Possible Group Final Projects?**
You have the option to conduct your final assignment in a group (max 5 people). With a group project, you can tackle a broader topic in health communication and have each group member elaborate in more detail on a subtopic. For example, a Group Project with 4 students about Diabetes could have the following papers and presentations: One could do a literature review about communication and primary prevention; another could do a participant-observation report of a nutritionist’s office; another could do a media analysis of how diabetes appears on TV, and another could do a media analysis of diabetes support groups on social media. This is one example. The requirements for each paper/presentation are the same as above, but the group should also make connections between the findings. Those interested in a group project should approach me with their ideas early in the semester so I can help you make it a success.

**ePortfolios:**
An ePortfolio is like your own personal website advertising your skills. At the end of the semester, post 6 to 10 pages of your revised course work on Open Lab. Include Weekly Responses, In-class Personal Narratives, and the Final Project. Don’t throw anything away or lose your work! For in-class personal narratives, please scan the original, hand-written document to include along with the revised, typed copy.
to show your progress over the semester. The assignment also requires uploading pictures, links, and resumes, etc. for a professional and comprehensive picture of you for potential employers to view. Your ePortfolio is intended to be public and you have access to it after the course is completed and even after you graduate! Therefore, the ePortfolio is envisioned as a repository of your best work that you can share with future employers. More about the ePortfolio appears at the end of this course outline.

Grading:
Weekly One Page Reading Responses 25%
Final Assignment, your choice of EITHER
- Analysis of a news story 25%
- Observation of a health care setting
- Design a health campaign
- Student’s Choice 25%
ePortfolio (compilation /revisions of coursework) 25%
Online Participation (Discussion Board) 15%
Class Participation 10%
Total 100%

### COURSE INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES/ASSESSMENT METHODS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES:</th>
<th>ASSESSMENT METHODS:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gather, interpret, and assess information from a variety of sources and points of view.</td>
<td>Discussion board requires linking to editorials expressing different viewpoints; final assignments require library research</td>
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<td>Evaluate evidence and arguments critically or analytically.</td>
<td>News analysis assignment and Observation assignment require critical analysis of evidence and identification of frames and biases</td>
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<td>Produce well-reasoned written or oral arguments using evidence to support conclusions.</td>
<td>Final paper and oral presentation require arguments supported with evidence from observational details, specific textual examples and scholarly literature on behavior change</td>
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<td>Identify and apply the fundamental concepts and methods of a discipline or interdisciplinary field exploring the relationship between the individual and society, including, but not limited to, anthropology, communications, cultural studies, history, journalism, philosophy, political science, psychology, public affairs, religion, and sociology.</td>
<td>Through introduction of qualitative research methods and selection of final assignment options, students recognize Health Communication as an interdisciplinary practice grounded in Communication Studies and incorporating case studies from behavioral sciences and public health.</td>
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<td>Examine how an individual's place in society affects experiences, values, or choices.</td>
<td>Lectures identify social, behavioral, cultural and socioeconomic predictors of health outcomes, while writing prompts in the first person (and resulting discussions) enlist students to identify communication problems in health care based on their own encounters as providers or with providers.</td>
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<td>Articulate and assess ethical views and their underlying premises.</td>
<td>Clinical scenarios provided during week 3 simulation exercise provokes discussion of structural limitations</td>
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of communication resulting from managed care practices. In Week 9 lecture complex interest groups underwriting health policy are presented and student discussion question considers conflict of interest in journals, government agencies and medical industries.

| Articulate ethical uses of data and other information resources to respond to problems and questions. | In week five students evaluate EHR and CPOE regarding privacy protection. Week six lecture focuses on information access and raises ethical questions about proprietary data hidden from scientific scrutiny per intellectual property statutes. |
| Identify and engage with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, and analyze their impact on individual or collective decision-making. | Beginning in week two health care ideologies are identified, contrasting individualistic/collectivistic approaches, as well as personal agency vs. determinism. |

**Provisional Schedule**

The following is a description of all of our face-to-face, in-classroom meetings for the semester. NOTE: This is a sample schedule, subject to change, that may not reflect your section.

**Week 1:** “What is Health Communication?” Roll call, syllabus overview and introduction to communication studies. Health Communication as metaphor, social science and practice. The bio-psycho-social model of health care delivery. The role of social and interpersonal support in health outcomes. In the first week of classes the Blackboard Discussion Board is introduced with instructions for posting threads and replying to others. Readings for following week: Chapters 1 & 2

**Week 2:** “Structure and agency.” This course module focuses on the role of attitude and belief and how expectancies can shape health outcomes. Medicine reframes patients as consumers of health services and products, but the choices we can make are delimited by cost—as well as the ideology of managed care that involves a cost-benefits analysis. How much are health outcomes the results of our decisions and willpower, and how much are they determined from forces outside of our control? (For example, toxic substances outdoors and in our homes; food security, poverty, inequality, sexism, racism and environmental pollution?) Reading for following week: Chapter 3

**Week 3:** “Introducing clinical simulation.” This week we look at issues of performance and affect in clinical encounters. Students are provided with clinical scenarios and play the role of patient and provider. Each student has the opportunity to play both the provider, the patient, and separate members of a multidisciplinary team. We cover platforms such as STEPPs and visit the City Tech Nursing Simulation Lab (and CUNY’s NYSIM) for a close-up look of simulation in health care. Readings for following week: Chapters 6 & 7

**Week 4:** “Detailed observations of the health encounter.” This week we focus on ethnography (and participant-observation) as methods for paying close attention to the ways that people communicate about health. Ethnographic methods help sharpen our listening and observational skills, and an ‘ethnographic sketch’ writing exercise requires us to stick close to the ‘data’ that our five senses provide us during a
health encounter. Requirements for the Observation of a Healthcare Setting option of our final assignments are presented. Reading for following week: Chapter 9

Week 5: “Health Technologies as Communication.” Electronic Health Records (EHR) are changing the way care is provided, but how do providers manage HIPPA concerns? Computerized Provider Order Entry (CPOE) is now standard practice, but how can a provider be present with the patient while staring into a computer screen? In what ways do these and other communication technologies both enable and inhibit the delivery of patient centered care? We consider these and other questions by conducting Quality Assurance (QA) of an electronic health communication platform, evaluating it for ease of use, navigation and other measures of evaluation. Reading for following week: Chapter 10

Week 6: “Health Communication and Health Literacy.” In a diverse society such as ours, how is health literacy defined? In this section, we look at the cultural construction of health concepts, and how specialist terminology can get in the way of ‘adherence.’ We also study the problem of miscommunication in healthcare and preventable illnesses, injuries and death caused by medical practices. Another challenge for health literacy is being able to distinguish evidence-based medicine from lesser forms of health information and misinformation. Non-English speaker issues are considered as determinants of morbidity and mortality, and opportunities for multi-lingual speakers in healthcare professions are highlighted. Reading for following week: Chapter 14

Week 7: “Health Marketing and Promotion.” What are Public Service Announcements (PSAs), and how are they different from commercial advertisements? How can fear-appeals sometimes backfire? Based on best practices in Health Marketing we design a social media campaign. We also look at Media Effects research that provides empirical measurement for the success and failure of public health campaigns. In addition, we explore how interactive communication technologies (ICTs) are a game-changer for unidirectional health messaging as traditionally conceived. Readings for following week: Chapters 4 & 5

Week 8: “Narrative Medicine.” Narrative, or story-telling, is an important way we can make meaningful our experiences with health, illness and wellness. Biomedical rationalities are contrasted with non-medical sense-making about health and illness. We learn how listening and rapport provides a more comprehensive understanding of the patient beyond bullet lists of symptoms and metrics. This week we begin talking about the final assignments and portfolios. Reading for following week: Chapter 11

Week 9: “Interpreting and Communicating Health News.” How can we keep up with breaking news stories that address us as consumers and persons? How do we navigate the sometimes-contradictory advice that appears in public discourse? This week we learn how to summarize and critically analyze news stories. Techniques in content analysis and frame analysis are introduced. We also explore how to present technical research to a non-technical audience. Reading over break: Chapter 12

Week 10: “Final Project Workshop.” Discuss expectations for the final projects. A one-page summary describing your final project due.

Week 11: “Careers in Health Communication.” Communication skills are always the main thing that employers say they are looking for in job candidates. This week we focus on the areas where health
communication can be applied in the work world. Topics include interdisciplinary teams, hierarchies and specializations in health care. By looking at statistics and job listings we discover occupations that are in demand, and also consider post-graduate work in the field of Health Communication.

**Week 12:** “ePortfolios.” At this point in the semester students have a body of work consisting of in-class writing prompts and weekly reading summaries. This week we focus on the process of revision and how to showcase our unique talents to make us stand out from the crowd of other job applicants. Peer reviews take place in smaller groups.

**Week 13:** “Introduction to Risk and Emergency Communication.” Communicators are employed in emergency response at the federal, state and local levels. These professionals protect the public by preparing for worst case scenarios, like hurricanes, earthquakes, or pandemic influenza. This week we look at emergency response training rubrics and we conduct a mock exercise in crisis and emergency risk communication.

**Week 14:** Final Presentations.

**Week 15:** Final Presentations. **Final Projects and ePortfolios due**

**CLASS POLICIES**

**Humanities Department Attendance Policy**
It is the conviction of the Humanities department that a student who is not in a class for any reason is not receiving the benefit of the education being provided. Missed class time includes not just absences but also latenesses, early departures, and time outside the classroom taken by students during class meeting periods. Missed time impacts any portion of the final grade overtly allocated to participation and/or any grades awarded for activities that relate to presence in class.

**Academic Integrity at City Tech**
“Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion.”

Plagiarism is not tolerated. Any information you find on the web, at the library or in books must be cited in 3 places: In a Works Cited section, in-text and out loud while you are giving your presentation. If you don’t cite your sources correctly you are given one warning. Further offenses result in a grade of F in the course.

**Religious Holidays and Observances:**
In accordance with University policies, students should notify the instructor before missing class due to a religious observance or holiday.
Make-Up Policies:
Because of scheduling difficulties for in-class assignments, presentations, and papers, make-up work is only be possible in the case of documented medical emergencies. If you contact me after you have missed the class, you can’t make-up the assignment.

Reasonable Accommodations:
City Tech complies with all provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and makes reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Please contact Disability Resources Services at (718) 260-5143 for more information. The resource office is located in the Atrium Building, Room A-237. If you have a documented disability that requires academic accommodations, please see me in private so that we can discuss the accommodations that you need in this class. It is best to do this at the beginning of the course.

More about designing your ePortfolio

This assignment is where you design a portfolio to showcase your communication skills. City Tech has a powerful tool available to create a digital portfolio called Open Lab. Your first step is to sign up for Open Lab and click on the “My OpenLab” tab, then click “+ Create a Portfolio.” The Open Lab Interface then walks you through the process with prompts to make your own online profile that available to you even after you graduate. Here, I want you to establish your own “digital calling card” that you can show to employers, highlighting your communication skills. Remember that this portfolio is public so put your best foot forward.

Rubric for Assessing ePortfolios*
This rubric is intended as a heuristic for what makes an effective ePortfolio. There are two criteria, one for the design/navigation and one for content. The content area is further divided into textual and audiovisual content. Each item can receive points from one to five, out of a hundred possible points. As you create your ePortfolio, you should refer back to this rubric to see what criteria the Professor is using to evaluate it.

Design/Navigation

- Is the student’s ePortfolio site easy to navigate? (+5)
- Are there discrete, clickable content areas on tabs or is it all in one area? (+5)
- Do each of the content areas showcase a distinct area of the student’s portfolio? (+5)
- Does each content area provide a clear, brief description of the contents and how they represent a certain skill or competency? (+5)
- Does the student show creativity in designing the ePortfolio? (+5)
- Does the student use a combination of multimedia materials to make the portfolio visually appealing? (+6)
  - A suitable banner/ picture on homepage? (+2)
  - A good photo of the student in professional attire? (+2)
- Is this, overall, a nice looking, impressive, intuitive presentation of the student? Does the student develop the "brand" concept by reiterating core competencies and interests? (+5)

Content
• Is there enough content on this site to provide a mental picture of the student and what they are capable of? Is there too much content that might be overwhelming to a potential employer? (+5)
• Is the content provided by the student appropriate and relevant as a demonstration of their health communication skills? (+5)

Textual content:
  o Do they provide a capsule description on the flash page that succinctly sums up who they are and what they have to offer? (+5)
  o Do the written materials provided demonstrate the writing competencies of the student? Are the written materials free of errors in spelling, punctuation, usage and formatting? (+5)
  o Do the written materials effectively support the capsule statement on the splash page? (+5)
  o Does the student provide adequate short descriptions of the written content and how each item showcases their professional and communication skills? (+5)

Audiovisual content:
  o Does the student take advantage of the rich multimedia possibilities of the Open Lab ePortfolio platform? (+5)
  o Does the student include photos, charts, or videos that are appropriate to the purpose of showcasing their professional and communication skills? (+5)
  o Does the student provide an example of them speaking on a .mov file, and is the video easy to see and hear? (+5)
  o Does the example of the student’s verbal communication skills appear to be well spoken and articulate? (+5)
  o Do the audiovisual materials effectively support the capsule statement on the splash page? (+5)
  o Does the student provide adequate short descriptions of the audiovisual content and how each item showcases their professional and communication skills? (+5)

UPDATED JUNE 2018, DAVID LEE