

COM2120: HEALTH COMMUNICATION

Effective Term

Semester A 2025/26

Part I Course Overview

Course Title

Health Communication

Subject Code

COM - Media and Communication

Course Number

2120

Academic Unit

Media and Communication (COM)

College/School

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences (CH)

Course Duration

One Semester

Credit Units

3

Level

B1, B2, B3, B4 - Bachelor's Degree

Medium of Instruction

English

Medium of Assessment

English

Prerequisites

Nil

Precursors

Nil

Equivalent Courses

Nil

Exclusive Courses

GE1223 Public Health Communication

GE2266 Health Communication

Part II Course Details

Abstract

This course introduces the theories and practices behind the communication of health-related behaviors. Topics will include history and scope of health communication, health communication processes and theories, interpersonal and organizational communication involved in public health care, media campaign design and evaluation, health situation analysis, e-health and mobile technologies, and cultural and ethical concerns in health communication. This course is designed for students with varying interests: those who wish to work in public or non-profit health organizations that strive to enhance healthcare, media institutions that report and disseminate health and medical information, or other organizations related to disease control, health management, public recreations and fitness programs, and etc. The teaching and learning will pay particular attention to significant health issues and application examples in Hong Kong, such as infectious diseases, food safety, smoking, nutrition, obesity, and drug use. At the course's completion, students will have clear ideas about principles and practices for delivering health information through various communication means.

Course Aims

The overall goal for the course is to help students discover how health and illness affects and is affected by communication. It has been consistently shown in research that public health outcomes can be improved through effective communication of timely, accurate health information. Clear communication is essential to successful public health practices at intrapersonal, interpersonal, group, organizational, and societal levels. Contemporary health care has demonstrated a strong need for communicating accurate and reliable information and promoting behavioral changes for the enhancement of the quality of life and individuals' well-beings with in the community. Such need is highlighted within a global context where infectious diseases, food safety, nutrition and physical activities have become world-wide common concerns. In the contexts of Hong Kong and Greater China, population density and close proximity for interpersonal contact lead to aggressive spread of diseases. Low health literacy, environmental risks, limited resources, and poor governance and intervention also pose serious health threats to public health practices. Developing tailored health messages and communicating them with strategic media planning are particularly acute, give that there is an increased competition for attention in our information age. It is therefore theoretically critical and practically important for the students to develop a basic understanding of health communication.

Course Intended Learning Outcomes (CILOs)

CILOs		Weighting (if DEC-A1 DEC-A2 DEC-A3 app.)			
1	Articulate the processes and effects of health communication and identify key issues on health beliefs and behaviors				x
2	Discuss how communication theories and models can explain, predict and change health-related beliefs and behaviors			x	x
3	Evaluate the effectiveness of real-life health campaigns or case studies		x	x	x
4	Implement health communication strategies by leveraging theories to craft effective health messages		x	x	x

A1: Attitude

Develop an attitude of discovery/innovation/creativity, as demonstrated by students possessing a strong sense of curiosity, asking questions actively, challenging assumptions or engaging in inquiry together with teachers.

A2: Ability

Develop the ability/skill needed to discover/innovate/create, as demonstrated by students possessing critical thinking skills to assess ideas, acquiring research skills, synthesizing knowledge across disciplines or applying academic knowledge to real-life problems.

A3: Accomplishments

Demonstrate accomplishment of discovery/innovation/creativity through producing /constructing creative works/new artefacts, effective solutions to real-life problems or new processes.

Learning and Teaching Activities (LTAs)

LTAs		Brief Description	CILO No.	Hours/week (if applicable)
1	Lectures	Key concepts, theories, perspectives, and case studies	1, 2, 3	1.5 hours for 12 weeks
2	Class participation	Discussions, presentations, and use of Internet to search for materials and real-world cases related to health beliefs and behaviors	1, 2, 3	1.5 hours for 12 weeks
3	Group projects	In-depth case studies of health communication; develop health campaigns with a range of media applications	2, 3, 4	

Assessment Tasks / Activities (ATs)

ATs		CILO No.	Weighting (%)	Remarks ("-" for nil entry)	Allow Use of GenAI?
1	Class participation	1, 2, 3, 4	10	Assessment will be based on participation in small group discussion and in-class activities	No
2	Two individual assignments (health behavior/ message analysis; theory application; 1,000-1,500 words each)	1, 2, 3	30	Assessment will be based on critiques and comments about lecture notes, readings and other class materials (15% for each assignment)	Yes
3	One In-class quiz	1, 2, 3	30	Assessment will be based on students' knowledge of key concepts, theories, examples and perspectives	No

4	Group project (presentation + final report)	2, 3, 4	30	Assessment will be based on how students can work together to a) identify a real life health issue, b) apply relevant concepts and principles to analyze the target, c) propose effective educational or communication solutions, and d) present the results to class.	Yes
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Continuous Assessment (%)

100

Examination (%)

0

Additional Information for ATs

In individual assignments and group projects, students will be guided to incorporate AI's use in their learning by examining AI-powered health apps and by collaborating with AI to brainstorm potential topics and approaches to the topics. However, students are prohibited from using the AI to generate their final report. Students must clearly declare their usage of AI (including the specific AI tool used and the purpose and scope of usage) in the progress of completing their final group project.

Assessment Rubrics (AR)**Assessment Task**

1. One In-class Quiz

Criterion

KNOWLEDGE of health theories and communication theories

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

Comprehensive understandings of knowledge and theories

Good (B+, B, B-)

Sufficient understandings of knowledge and theories

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate understandings of knowledge and theories

Marginal (D)

Basic understandings of knowledge and theories

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Assessment Task

2. Two Individual assignments

Criterion

CAPACITY for analyzing health behaviors/messages

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High capacity in analyzing health behaviors/messages

Good (B+, B, B-)

Significant capacity in analyzing health behaviors/messages

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate capacity in analyzing health behaviors/messages

Marginal (D)

Basic capacity in analyzing health behaviors/messages

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Assessment Task

3. Group project (presentation + final report)

Criterion

CAPACITY for SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING to understand health communication and identify key health issues

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High capacity in self-directed learning

Good (B+, B, B-)

Significant capacity in self-directed learning

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate capacity in self-directed learning

Marginal (D)

Basic capacity in self-directed learning

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Assessment Task

4. Class participation

Criterion

ATTITUDE for active learning and participation

Excellent (A+, A, A-)

High engagement in active learning and participation

Good (B+, B, B-)

Significant engagement in active learning and participation

Fair (C+, C, C-)

Moderate engagement in active learning and participation

Marginal (D)

Basic engagement in active learning and participation

Failure (F)

Not even reaching marginal levels

Part III Other Information

Keyword Syllabus

Public health, health campaign design, health behavioural intervention, persuasion, cognitive and social models, behavior change theory, health belief system, e-health/m-health, tailored message design, situation analysis, health communication planning, health narratives, disease prevention, risk assessment, infotainment, infodemic, community-based intervention, infectious diseases, food safety, smoking, nutrition, obesity, drug use, recreations and fitness programs

Reading List

Compulsory Readings

Title	
1	Schiavo, R. (2013). Health communication: From theory to practice (2nd). New York, NY: Jossey-Bass.
2	Thompson, T. L. & Schulz, P. J. (2021). Health Communication Theory. Wiley-Blackwell

Additional Readings

Title	
1	National Cancer Institute. (2005). Theory at a glance: A guide for health promotion practice (2nd ed.). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute
2	Making health communication programs work : a planner's guide. (2002). [Bethesda, Md.] :U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, National Institutes of Health, [Office of Cancer Communications, National Cancer Institute]