

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

Communication and Media Studies COMS 503, Lecture 01
Advanced Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies:
Communication and Health
Winter 2019

Tuesday, January 15 – Tuesday, April 9 (excluding Feb. 19)

T 14:00-16:45

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 1-2 p.m.

Course Description

Advanced study of contemporary topics or issues related to communications media, technology, culture or discourse.

Special topic: Communication and Health: Troubling Promotion.

Additional Information

Communication and Health examines the concept of health as a socio-cultural phenomena, and interrogates the ways that “health” issues are communicated, defined, represented, framed, subjected to PR spin, and act as a form of governmentality. The sub-theme of the course is *Troubling Promotion*, which aims to provide a critical space in which to explore the concept of health through the lens of communication. It embraces cultural and media representations of health (and health issues), along with questions of health and identity, health promotion and advocacy, health and risk, policy and regulation, governance, and social movements.

Objectives of the Course

Course objectives are to:

- 1) familiarize students with some of the main theoretical and interdisciplinary approaches relevant to understanding communication and health
- 2) critically examine how issues of health are communicated, defined, framed and represented—and act as a form of governmentality
- 3) assess the strengths and weakness of the various approaches outlined in objective 1
- 4) interrogate the particular questions arising from a *communications*-oriented perspective of health and health issues (i.e., what does it *mean* to be a communications scholar studying issues of health? What kinds of questions should

we ask? What kinds of interpretations does a communications-oriented approach produce?

Textbooks and Readings

All readings are available online through the UofC library databases.

Internet and electronic communication device information

Cell phones must be turned off during the course. Laptops are permitted for note taking only (no emailing, social media, etc.). Note that the research suggests that university students who hand write their course notes retain the material better than students who type notes into a computer.

Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
5%	Five-minute reviews	Throughout the semester; sign up for dates
10%	Class participation, thoughtful engagement and clear demonstration of having read assigned readings	
25%	Key Points, Key Queries (KPKQ)	Throughout the semester; sign up for dates
10%	Critical appraisal of a qualifying journal article (5 pages)	Throughout the semester; sign up for dates
30%	Final Paper (12-15 pages)	April 9
20%	Take Home Exam	No later than 4:00 p.m., April 16

1. Five-Minute Reviews (5%)

Each class will begin with a five-minute review. These are fun, oral, ‘think’ pieces designed to warm us up, to get us thinking and talking, and to bring current issues pertaining to communication and health into the seminar room. Students will sign up for dates in the first week of class. Presentations should be five minutes, and up to a maximum of seven minutes, examine a current issue related to communication and health and does not require any other *academic* research. Examine the issue, probe its implications, go on a rant – any approach is acceptable as long as it draws out a current issue relevant to the course and shows us you’re thinking about it in a rigorous way. Your selected issue does not have to be connected to the material to be covered in that particular class. Have some fun with these – expose us to some interesting events and issues, and invite us to think and discuss.

2. Participation (10%)

Students are expected to attend all classes, respect the start/finish times of the class, read the required readings and discussion pieces, and be prepared to identify and discuss issues emerging from these in a thoughtful and informed manner during the class. Students are encouraged to ask questions, probe issues, challenge assumptions and bring their experiences to the materials being engaged with.

3. Key Points, Key Queries (KPKQ) (25%)

Every student will be responsible for signing up for one *Key Points, Key Queries*. KPKQ is an assessment of one of the assigned readings— 30 minutes in length—will be presented to the class.

For the assigned reading in question, identify three key points from that reading – what you believe are the key take-away points – and one or two thoughtful and analytical queries arising from the reading. (Students might productively approach the queries in terms of first asking themselves, “What is working in the analysis?” {i.e., identifying strengths} and “What is missing?” {i.e. identifying oversights}).

The assessment will cover the points above (i.e., what is working, what is missing, etc.). But consider the following:

1. The author's theoretical position. (what do they privilege as their ‘site’ of analysis (e.g. social relations, content, structure, etc.)?)
2. What are the questions the author is asking, either directly or indirectly? (This will likely be covered by the Key Points you identify – although you might want to consider the difference between theoretical and empirical questions).
3. What steps (i.e. methodology) are they taking to answer those questions? Are they sufficient? How might these questions be approached differently? What might the implications be of pursuing these questions from a different methodological perspective?
4. How persuasive is the author's argument and conclusion(s)? If lacking in persuasion, why has the author not convinced you of their case?
5. How might this approach inform a communication and health issue of your own choosing?

4. Critical Appraisal (10%)

Students will submit a critical appraisal of one of the ‘eligible’ assigned readings (N.B. this cannot be same reading that the student presents for their KPKQ, and the list of readings that students can select from will be provided at the beginning of the semester – not all of them are eligible for this critical appraisal). To appraise suggests a clear understanding and articulation of the content and core arguments, and will include evaluation of the article similar to that detailed for the KPKQ presentation. The critical appraisal must be submitted at the beginning of the class that the assigned reading in question is discussed (this is non-negotiable), and should be roughly 2,000 words in length, and appropriately cited. Grammar, clarity of writing, accuracy of interpretation all factor in the grade assigned.

5. Final paper – Critical analysis of a ‘Communication and Health’ issue (media framing analysis) (30%)

“Rough cuts”: in class presentation: March 19

Final paper due: April 9

Students are required to select a specific issue they are interested in pertaining to Communication and Health, and to analyze the media representation of that issue. The topic possibilities are vast (i.e., Communication and Health-related issues pertain to health, health risks, public health crises, 'risky' behaviours, mental health, illness, etc.). Potential topics could range from obesity or the risks associated with smoking, to HIV/AIDS, breast cancer and the H1N1 'pandemic'.

Students will analyze the media coverage of the issue—it can include newspapers, televised news, a Netflix series, blog sites, twitter feeds, etc. The time frame for the analysis (and the media) can be selected by the student, depending on the issue (it can be historical or present). However, the monitoring of the 'issue' must be carefully worked out (i.e., "X number of newspapers over Y period", so that the analysis is rigorous). The point of the critical analysis is to assess, drawing from the coverage, how the selected "issue" is framed, represented, and communicated to the public.

Students should consider the following questions in writing the analysis, but refrain from

- 1) What are the 'common ingredients' comprising the stories? (What is the 'story' being told to the public about this issue?)
- 2) Who are the principal actors in the story? (Who are the spokespeople? Who is silent? What assumptions, if any, are made about the actors? Who are the villains? The heroes?)
- 3) What is the dominant/preferred reading of the story? (How does the coverage lead readers to interpret the meaning of the issue in a particular way? Whose agenda does the coverage suggest the issue is about?)
- 4) What is emphasized in your issue (and what is rendered invisible)?
- 5) How are uncertainties/anxieties around risk dealt with?
- 6) What is the 'solution'?
- 7) Did your analysis of the coverage in light of these questions draw attention to issues that you had not previously considered? If so, what were they?

Rough cuts: Students will present their "issue" to the class on March 19, 2018. This presentation is expected to be polished, but you will not be graded on it. It is the opportunity to get valuable feedback from the class (regarding oversights, implications, theoretical aspects you might consider, etc) that you can take into consideration for the full paper. The full paper will be 12 -15 pages.

Make sure your paper is double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font.

Quality of writing (e.g. organization of ideas, sentence structure, grammar etc.) will factor strongly in the marking of all assignments.

The scope of this research paper is open; use this as an opportunity to examine an aspect of communication and health that is intriguing to you.

4. Take home exam No later than 4:00 p.m. April 16 (20%)

The take home exam will evaluate students' analytic comprehension of the course materials (lectures and readings). No outside research is required, and students will have one week to complete the take home exam. The exam will be distributed in class April 9.

It is due no later than 4 p.m., Tuesday April 16.

As this is a final exam, the deadline for submission is firm. No late assignments will be accepted.

***Students may not collaborate on this assignment.**

It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment.

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

You do not need to complete all assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in the course.

Submission of Assignments: Please hand in your essays directly to your instructor if possible. If it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. The final exam may be emailed to the instructor.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments or look at marked final exams in SS 320. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/foip-hia>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that the proper version is submitted (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission). Including a version date in your file name may be useful.

Policy for Late Assignments

Assignments submitted after the deadline will be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late. The only exception is for the final, take home exam: **no late submissions are permitted. Take home exams submitted after the deadline will receive a grade of 0.**

Student Accommodations and Deferrals:

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services; SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For additional information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit www.ucalgary.ca/access/.

Students who require an accommodation in relation to their coursework based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or for another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, please see the following:

- Section N.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/n-1.html>
- FAQs for Students at <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

Note that when accommodations are granted, they may take forms other than make-up tests or assignments. For example, the weight of a missed grade may be added to that of another assignment or test.

For information on deferrals, see the following sections in the *University Calendar*:

- Section G.7 Deferral of Term Work at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>
- Section G.6 Deferral of Final Exam at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

Final grades are reported as letter grades. Course components will be graded using percentages and converted into letter grades.

The following chart outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Percentages are used in grading, which are then converted into letter grades for each assignment. In calculating final grades in this course, the percentages for each assignment are used to determine a final percentage, which is then converted to a corresponding GPA.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations* **
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

* If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades.

** These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library). Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long

quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links at <https://ucalgary.ca/ssc/resources/writing-support/436>. Research and citation resources are also available on the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) website at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/> If you have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the writing support services in the Student Success Centre (3rd floor, Taylor Family Digital Library, at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>.

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations, as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/resources/ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (ASC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 https://arts.ucalgary.ca/advising
CAMPUS SECURITY & Safewalk Program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly 	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333 403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911 http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints
DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students 403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca
STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Events & Info for Students 	http://ucalgary.ca/ssc http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents
STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombuds 	https://www.su.ucalgary.ca/about/who-we-are/elected-officials/ http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds

<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health Services • Mental Health Services • Distress entre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>
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Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings – Detailed course readings will be posted on D2L

January 15: Introduction

January 22: Theorizing health: The body and (social/moral) regulation

January 29: Pandemic culture

February 5: Regulating ‘risky’ products: From peanuts to cannabis

February 12: Marketing ‘risky’ foods: Children, youth and policy

February 19: Reading Week (no scheduled classes)

February 26: Advocacy and health: Health as a commodity vs. health as a human right

March 5: Media, new media and health: Issues in framing and legitimacy

March 12: Obesity and health: The “failed” body project

March 19: Rough cuts (class presentations on final project)

March 26: Public engagement in health

April 2: The commodification of the body and of disease

April 9: Wrap up: Theorizing communication and health