Proposal for a New Graduate Course

Department: Communication
Graduate Program: Master of Arts in Communication

Course Number & Title: COMM 538: Health Communication
Total hours/week: 3
Number of Credits
Lectures: 3
Lab: N/A

Will this course be cross-listed with an undergraduate or other graduate course? ☐ YES ☑ NO
If yes, please complete an attach to this proposal a Permission to Cross-List a Graduate Course form.

Course will first be offered: Spring 2011

Catalog description (Please limit to 50 words): A survey of theory and research in health communication, this course addresses interpersonal, group, organizational, and mediated aspects of health, illness, and health care.

Prerequisites (or other restrictions) None.

Rationale/justification for course (consider the following issues):

a. What are the goals and objectives of the course? This course is designed to introduce students to the disciplinary research literature in health communication. Students will become familiar with the foundational issues in the field, as well as emerging perspectives and contexts relevant to health, illness, and the medical establishment.

b. How does the course support the mission statement of the department and the organizing principles of the graduate program? The Department of Communication is committed to producing students who possess core competencies in the field of communication. The Master of Arts degree program in communication builds on these core competencies by further developing students’ understanding of theory and critical and applied research. Health communication, by its very nature allows students to engage both theory and practice in various health contexts.

If more space is needed for any section, please attach additional sheets to this form.
November 2007
Are other departments affected by this course? □ YES X NO

(Please attach letters of support from the chairs of each department indicating the Department has discussed and supports the proposal.)

While several academic departments at the College of Charleston have interests in health and healthcare, those departments do not support graduate programs in disciplines related to communication. In addition, health communication is a large and established sub-field in the communication discipline. The Department of Communication will not prevent or oppose efforts by other departments or schools to develop graduate courses or programs relevant to health or healthcare.

Is this course part of a joint program? □ YES X NO If yes, at what institution?

Method of teaching: Seminar/discussion

If more space is needed for any section, please attach additional sheets to this form.

November 2007
Expected changes

a. Address potential enrollment pattern shifts in the Department or University-wide as it relates to the offering of this course.

This will be one elective course among several such courses in the department’s graduate program. No meaningful enrollment shift is anticipated.

b. Address potential shifts in staffing of the departments as it relates to the offering of this course.

Several faculty colleagues in the department are qualified to teach this course. The course previously has been offered under a seminar number, with no challenge where departmental staffing is concerned.

Requirements for additional resources made necessary by this course. (Note: course requiring additional resources will need special justification.)

a. Staff

None. Multiple graduate faculty members in the Department of Communication are qualified to teach this course.

b. Budget

None. The department has the resources needed to support this course.

c. Library

None. The extant communication library budget provides sufficient support for the necessary serials and monographs relevant to this course.

Attach course syllabus, reading list, or any additional documentation that can help the committee evaluate this proposal. A syllabus is mandatory.

If more space is needed for any section, please attach additional sheets to this form.
Signature of Program Director: [Signature] Date: 2/22/10
Signature of Department Chair: [Signature] Date: 2/22/10
Additional Chair’s Signature*: [Signature] Date: 2/23/10
Signature of Schools’ Dean: [Signature] Date: 2/23/2010
Additional Schools’ Dean Signature*: [Signature] Date: 
Signature of the Provost: [Signature] Date: 
Signature of Budget Director**: [Signature] Date: 

*For interdisciplinary courses. **Business Affairs Office

Return form to the Graduate School Office for Further Processing

Signature of Chair of the Faculty Committee on Graduate and Continuing Education: [Signature] Date: 2/24/2010
Signature of Chair of Grad Council: [Signature] Date: 3/24/2010
Signature of the Faculty Secretary: [Signature] Date: 

If more space is needed for any section, please attach additional sheets to this form.
COMM 538 – Health Communication
Sample Syllabus

Scope of the course: Health communication has significantly grown as an area of focus for communication scholars. This course is designed to give a broad introduction to the theory and practice of health communication in various personal, interpersonal, group, family, organizational, and mediated contexts. The course includes issues related to illness and identity, the social construction of health, illness and medicine, social support, uncertainty, risk, and media representations.

Goals:
Students in this course will
• Have a broad understanding of the foundational theory and research in health communication
• Observe how communication theory informs understandings of health communication
• Explain how communication theory and research can inform and improve the reception of health messages
• Critically analyze health communication discourse

Required Texts:


Other readings will be made available in PDF format on WEB-CT.

Recommended Text:

If you are unfamiliar with the style manual of the American Psychological Association, you should definitely get a copy of the latest edition. APA Style is the standard for the
field of communication for research and publishing. It is the citation style expected and required for all work for this course. You can expect that papers which do not adhere to APA style will receive a significantly lower grade.

**Attendance**

While I don’t expect this to be an issue in a graduate class, the attendance policy is as follows. You should be here. I understand that, at times, life gets in the way. However, if you intend on missing more than one class this semester, you should consider whether or not this is the class for you.

**Assignments**

Note: All assignments should be typed, double spaced, and formatted in APA style. No late work will be accepted.

**Disability Accommodations**

Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. Such accommodations should be arranged for at the beginning of the semester and should be accompanied by official documentation provided by the SNAP office. It is the student’s responsibility to provide this documentation.

**Grading/Scale**

Below is a breakdown of assignments and percentages, along with the grading scale for the semester:

A = 92-100  
B+ = 88-91.99  
B = 82-87.99  
C+ = 78-81.99  
C = 70-77.99  
F = <70

Midterm (20%) of final grade

Final (20%) of final grade

Response Papers (30%): At various points in the semester (see schedule for details), you will be asked to create brief “proposition papers.” These papers are designed to encourage you to think critically about course content. You will state a proposition (thesis) about the readings and support it carefully with a structured, well-reasoned argument.
Final Project (30%): You will complete a substantive written project for this course. While I do not place specific page numbers on such projects, I would expect that fully developed papers would run about 20 pages, give or take. Some options:

*Literature Review:* You would complete a substantive and comprehensive review of the literature regarding a specific area of health communication. There would be no set number of sources. While this paper has a considerable descriptive component, you should also critique the literature in terms of what is both present and absent.

*Critical Research Project:* You would produce a complete critical analysis of some health related text. Your paper should include a justification of the significance of the text, a thorough review of the literature, a clear methodology, analysis, and implications.

*Qualitative or Quantitative Study:* You would produce a complete small scale study of a health communication related phenomenon. Your paper should include a justification of the significance of the study, a thorough review of the literature, a clear methodology, findings, and implications.

---

**Tentative Schedule**

Z=Zoller & Dutta    T=Thomson    W=Web-CT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Z - Ch.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>T - Ch. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Social Construction of Health</td>
<td>Z - Part 1 – Intro; Ch. 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>W – Parsons “Sick Role”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Social Construction, cont.</td>
<td>Morris (book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Stigma</td>
<td>Goffman (book)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 We will discuss information relevant to the use of human research participants and the Institutional Review Board on the first day of class.
Narrative
Z - Ch. 2
I - Ch. 2
W - Brody "Tell a Story"
W - Frank "Wounded"

Week 6
Provider-Patient Communication
T - Chs. 5-8
Z - Chs. 12-13

Week 7
Social Issues
T - Part III

Week 8
Social Issues, cont.
Adelman & Frey (book)

Week 9
Cultural Issues
Fadiman (book)
Z - Chs. 7-8

Week 10
Health Organizations
T - Part IV

Week 11
Uncertainty Across Contexts
W - Babrow
W - Montgomery

Week 12
Mediated Health Communication
T - Chs. 20-22

Week 13
Health and Entertainment
T - Chs. 24 & 26
W - Friedman "Sutures"
W - Jacobs "Trauma TV"

Week 14
Emerging Perspectives

Z – Chs. 19 & 20
T – Chs. 27 & 28