

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**COMS 503 (L01): Advanced Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies:**  
**Communication and Health**

**Winter 2021: January 15 – April 9 (excluding Feb. 19 and April 02)**

**Seminar: F 1:00 p.m.- 3:45 p.m.**  
(Seminars will be synchronous Zoom sessions)

**IMPORTANT NOTE ON COURSE DELIVERY FOR WINTER 2021:**

This Winter 2021 course will be offered entirely online as part of the University's plan to ensure everyone's safety during the Covid-19 pandemic. Synchronous course sessions will be hosted on Zoom, a video-conferencing program. To access scheduled Zoom course sessions, go to D2L, click on the COMMUNICATION tab, and select Zoom 5 or 10 minutes before class is scheduled to begin.

If you will not be able to participate in scheduled synchronous class sessions owing to time differences, then you should arrange to take this course when it is offered in person in the future.

<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Charlene Elliott
<b>Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:charlene.elliott@ucalgary.ca">charlene.elliott@ucalgary.ca</a> (emails will be responded to within 24 hours M-F. I do not check email in the evenings, on weekends, or on holidays).
<b>Web Page:</b>	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tuesdays, 12:00 - 2:00 p.m. (by appointment, on Zoom).

**Course Description**

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

Course topic: **Communication and Health: Troubling Promotion**

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, *Troubling Promotion*, 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.

**Additional Information**

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found at the end of this outline, with detailed course readings posted on D2L. All readings, including book chapters, are available online through the UofC library databases. The seminars will be held synchronously on Zoom. Students are responsible for reading and following all course and university policies discussed in this outline.

**Course objectives:**

- To provide students with a critical and theoretical vocabulary relevant to the study of health communication;
- To examine how various issues of health are communicated, defined, framed and represented—and act as a form of governmentality;
- To assess the strengths and weakness of the various approaches found in the assigned literature;
- To 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?)
- To provide opportunities for students to further develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills
- To encourage the development of an intellectual community in which claims regarding health (from various sources and media) can be discussed and evaluated.

**Textbooks and Readings**

All readings, including book chapters, are available online through the UofC library databases.

Students should **print out** all of the required readings, and have them present and **ready to reference** during the class discussion.

Why read the readings in hard copy? A growing body of literature has documented the benefits for comprehension from reading from the printed page. This is particularly the case when dealing with complex material, theory and non-fiction. See:

Clinton, V. (2019). Reading from paper compared to screens: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Research in Reading*, 42(2), 288–325. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9817.12269>

**Learning Technologies and Requirements  
& Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices**

This is an online course. In order to complete online courses, University of Calgary students are required to have reliable access to the following technology:

- A computer with a supported operating system, as well as the latest security and malware updates, with current antivirus software enabled;
- Broadband internet connection, and a current and updated web browser;
- A webcam (built-in or external);
- A microphone and speaker (built-in or external), or headset with microphone.

Most current laptops will have a built-in webcam, speaker and microphone. If you need access to other software programs to complete assignments, your instructor will provide relevant information and links.

If you have technical difficulties, contact the university's IT department. For more information, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/student-campus-services-information-technologies-it.html>

Synchronous zoom class sessions will be recorded for lesson capture; however, students are not to share recordings with others. Please carefully review the section on Instructor Copyright at the end of this outline.

## Assignments and Evaluation

Weight	Course components	Due
5%	Reading response paper	January 22
5%	Five-minute reviews (student may send a narrated powerpoint/videotaped presentation prepared in advance)	Throughout the semester; sign up for dates
10%	Class participation, thoughtful engagement and clear demonstration of having read assigned readings (includes submission of informed questions on assigned readings)	
25%	Key Points, Key Queries (KPKQ)	Throughout the semester (but all completed by March 12)
30%	Final Paper	April 9
25%	Take Home Exam (essay format: will cover the assigned readings/lecture material)	April 16 (no later than 4 p.m.)

### 1. Reading response papers (5%)

On January 22, prior to class, you will submit to D2L a 2-3 page (600-900 word) critical assessment of either the Hunt **or** Radley & Billig article. Your assessment must demonstrate that you: a) understand and can accurately represent the main argument(s); and b) have a thoughtful critique. This critique does not have to be critical or negative, and how you approach the response is up to you. You can apply the ideas of the article to a contemporary example (or assess its contribution to current notions around health), you can compare the arguments to one of the other assigned readings for the week in terms of how they play off each other. The important part is to demonstrate your own thinking and analysis in a rigorous assessment of the readings. The response paper must be properly cited (with a bibliography).

On the page prior to the bibliography (at the end of the assessment), please also include 2 discussion questions (key queries), which will be used to facilitate class discussion. This assignment is also designed to give you a chance to see how your colleagues approach and interpret the same material. Seminar time will be provided in which (via breakout rooms) you can read and comment on each other's responses with constructive suggestions for improvement.

### 2. Health check! 5-minute review (5%)

The five-minute reviews are fun, oral, 'think' pieces designed 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 the second week of class. You can pre-record your session if desired (which may be helpful in keeping to the time limit). Presentations should be **five minutes** and to a **maximum** of seven minutes, examine a current issue related to communication and health. The reviews do 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 **prior to the seminar** and be prepared to identify and discuss issues emerging from these in a thoughtful and informed manner. The zoom format will present new challenges but we will strive to make this interactive and engaging! A seminar format means that your

participation is key to the success of the class and to developing a critical and theoretical vocabulary relevant to the study of health communication. As part of the participation grade, students are expected to submit each week **two thoughtful questions** drawn from the assigned readings for that week, which demonstrate a careful reading of the assigned readings. These questions may be used to drive the discussion. (No questions are expected for Jan 22, April 9 or the week you present on your KPKQ (detailed below).

#### **4. Key Points, Key Queries (KPKQ) (25%)**

Every student will be responsible for leading a *Key Points, Key Queries*. KPKQ is an assessment of one of the assigned readings, which will be presented to the class (either individually or in groups, depending on class size).

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 be sure to consider (and identify) the following:

1. The author's theoretical position.
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?

#### **5. Final paper – Critical analysis of a ‘Communication and Health’ issue (media framing analysis) (30%) Due April 9**

**Rough cuts (March 19):** This is an opportunity to workshop your idea for the final paper with your colleagues without the pressure of an assigned grade. Details will be provided in class.

##### **Final paper:**

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 range from Covid, mask wearing, vaccines and pandemic culture, to self-tracking for health, obesity, cannabis, vaping, and mental health.

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 might consider the following questions when it comes to framing the analysis.

- 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?

The full paper should be 10 pages (not counting bibliography).

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.

#### **6. Take home exam    No later than 4:00 p.m. April 16 (25%)**

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

**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.**

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No**

**Note:** You do not have to complete all the assignments and exams in order to receive a passing grade in this course.

#### **Submission of Assignments**

Please submit all assignments electronically by uploading them to the designated D2L dropbox (unless instructed otherwise in the assignment guidelines). Include your name and ID number on all assignments. It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act**. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

### 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

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation 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 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, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

### Expectations for Writing

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses 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 and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

### Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

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%

<b>2.70</b>	Approaching good performance	<b>B-</b>	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
<b>2.30</b>	Exceeding satisfactory performance	<b>C+</b>	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
<b>2.00</b>	Satisfactory performance	<b>C</b>	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
<b>1.70</b>	Approaching satisfactory performance	<b>C-</b>	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
<b>1.30</b>	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D+</b>	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
<b>1.00</b>	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	<b>D</b>	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
<b>0.00</b>	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	<b>F</b>	0 - 49.99%	0%

\* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

### 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. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

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.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to <https://success.ucalgary.ca/home.htm>

### Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **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 obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

### **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

### **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at [itsupport@ucalgary.ca](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca) or by calling 403-220.5555.

### **Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings**

The weekly schedule of topics and readings can be found below, with detailed course readings posted on D2L.

#### **Schedule of Lectures**

**January 15. Introduction**

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

**January 29. Pandemic culture**

**February 5. On “health” representations and regulations: From patients to peanuts**

**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  
Obesity and health**

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

**March 12. Big Data and Health**

**March 19. Rough cuts (workshopping final project)**

**March 26. The commodification of the body and of disease**

**April 2. Good Friday (University Closed. No classes)**

**April 9. Wrap up: Theorizing Communication and Health**