

University of Calgary
Department of Communication, Media and Film

COMS 503 (L01): Advanced Special Topics in Communication and Media Studies:
Communication and Health
Winter 2022: January 14 to April 8 (excluding Feb. 25)
Seminar: F 1:00 p.m.- 3:45 p.m.

IMPORTANT NOTE FOR IN-PERSON COURSE DELIVERY

Note: This course will be delivered in-person. If you are unable to participate in-class owing to time differences or geographical location, please arrange to take this course in a future term

Instructor:	Dr. Charlene Elliott
Email:	charlene.elliott@ucalgary.ca Emails will be responded to within 24 hours M-F. <i>I do not check email in the evenings, on weekends, or on holidays.</i>
Web Page:	D2L (access via MyUofC portal)
Office Hours:	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 can be found at the end of this outline. All readings, including book chapters, are available online through the UofC library databases. 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**

In order to complete 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), and a microphone and speaker (built-in or external) or headset with microphone (for online courses only).

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>

Policy on the Use of Electronic Communication Devices

Cell phones must be turned off during the entire seminar. Laptops are permitted for note-taking only (no emailing, recording, 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%	Reading response paper	January 21 (and resubmitted, if desired, on Jan 28).
5%	Five-minute reviews	Throughout the semester. Sign up for dates.
15%	Class participation, thoughtful engagement and clear demonstration of having read assigned readings (includes submission of informed questions on assigned readings)	
25%	Triple C presentation	Throughout the semester. Sign up for dates.
30%	Final Paper	April 8
20%	Take Home Exam (essay format: will cover the assigned readings/course material)	April 20

1. Reading response papers (5%)

On January 21, at the beginning of class, you will submit a 600-900 word critical assessment of the Lupton, 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).

Bring two copies of your reading response, as this assignment is designed to give you an opportunity to see how your colleagues approach and interpret the same material. Seminar time will be provided in which you can read and comment on each other's responses with constructive suggestions for improvement. You will then be able to reflect on this commentary and submit a revised version of the paper (if you wish) at the start of class on January 28.

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.. 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 (e.g., peer reviewed articles, etc.). 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.

Note that this is a warm up activity. As such, the time limit on this presentation will be strictly enforced.

Presentations that go over the 7 minute time limit will be penalized one half letter grade.

2. Participation (15%)

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. 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 bring, and submit at the beginning of each seminar, **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 as the basis for discussion. (**No questions are expected for Jan 21, March 18, or April 8).

4. 3C Assignment: Capture, Critique and Connections (25%)

Every student will be responsible for leading a **30 minute** Triple C presentation (either individually or in groups, depending on the class size) on one of the assigned readings. The goal of this is to demonstrate that you can correctly “capture” (i.e., identify) the key arguments and theoretical and/or methodological approaches of the reading, provide a rigorous **critique** (which entails situating it within and also assessing literature on the same topic for what it has to add) and apply it to another case (**connections**).

The point of this assignment is not to summarize the article (everyone should have read it!). Instead, this is about engaging with the **content** of the actual article (i.e., please do **not** include any time filler preamble about who the authors are, where they work, their photos, their hobbies, etc.) Instead, the presentation must include the following:

Identify Key Points and Assess (i.e., Capture):

1. **Identify three key points** -- what you believe are **the key take-away points** from the reading. **(These should be succinct and to the point.)**

In discussing this, please also be sure to consider/identify:

- A) The author's theoretical position
- B) 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).
- C) What steps (i.e.. methodology) are they taking to answer those questions

Critique and Connections

This is where you provide an analytical and informed critical assessment of the reading.

Students might productively approach this by first asking themselves, “What is working in the analysis?” (i.e., identifying strengths) and “What is missing?” (i.e., identifying oversights). This informed critique should not be simply an opinionated opinion. Instead, students will need to research and explain **what other research on that topic is in the area—and what that research brings to your assessment**. For example, is there research that takes different methodological or theoretical approaches that brings new or interesting insight? If the article is from 5 years ago, is there newer research published that provides different perspectives or conclusions?

Finally, **detail how the article/approach in question might inform 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 8**

Rough cuts (March 18): 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 10-12 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* Due April 20 (20%)

The take home exam will evaluate students’ analytic comprehension of the course materials (lectures and readings). No outside research is required. The exam will be available on D2L on Monday April 11. It must be uploaded to D2L by 5 p.m. April 20.

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 in class (with the exception of the final take home exam, which can be uploaded to D2L). 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

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/. Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. For the full policy on Student Accommodations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/legal-services/university-policies-procedures/student-accommodation-policy>

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 a medical note. For information on the use of a statutory declaration, see the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>

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%
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%

* 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

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3rd 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) 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 deferral of term work, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>

For information about deferrals of final examinations, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>

For information about requesting a reappraisal of course work or of a final grade, see <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Student Support Services and Resources

Please see <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, Zoom, Yuja, etc., see <https://elearn.ucalgary.ca/resources-for-students/>. (Find the topic menu under the icon to the left of the ELEARN banner.)

Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings

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

January 14. Introduction

January 21. Communication and health: The body and (social/moral) regulation

January 28. Pandemic culture

February 4. On “health” representations and governmentality

February 11. Marketing ‘risky’ foods: Children, youth and policy

February 18: Obesity and health: The “failed” body project

February 25: Reading Week (no scheduled classes)

March 4: Advocacy and health: Marginalized populations and harm reduction

March 11: Big Data, health and surveillance

March 18: Rough cuts (presentations/workshopping of final project)

March 25: The commodification of the body and of disease

April 1: Media, new media and Covid: Communication in a pandemic

April 8: That’s a wrap! Theorizing Communication and Health

April 11: Distribution of take-home exam (on D2L)