

School of Public Health

PubH 6074 (cross-listed with JOUR 5541) Mass Communication & Public Health Spring 2009

Credits: 3
Meeting Days: Tuesday
Meeting Time: 4:00pm – 6:30pm
Meeting Place: 35 Nicholson Hall



Instructor: Dr. Marco Yzer
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Office Hours: Monday, Thursday 4:00pm – 5:00pm

I. Course Description

Welcome to Mass Communication and Public Health!

This course is designed to provide an overview of theory and research regarding the intersection of information available via mass media outlets and various aspects of public health. In this course we examine the potential impact of media content on public health outcomes both as a product of individual's everyday interaction with media and as a result of strategic use of media-based efforts to accomplish public health goals. Discussion will emphasize both planned and unplanned effects of mass media in a variety of health-related situations.

For SPH and Health Sciences students, this course is intended to complement courses in social and behavioral approaches to community health. This includes the intervention core in Community Health Education and the social and behavioral science perspectives in MPH programs in general. This course is primarily a critical review of theory, research, and applications of mass media in public health but applies to planning principles for developing media-based public health interventions.

For students in Journalism and Mass Communication, the course is intended to complement social and behavioral science approaches to public opinion and media effects as well as to provide another perspective on the study of mass media as social institutions.

For students in Health Communication, the course also is intended as a basis for courses on health message design and public health campaign evaluation.

II. Course Prerequisites

If you take the course as PubH 6074, the prerequisites are:

- One course in behavioral or social science, public health or journalism grad student or instructor consent

If you take the course as JOUR 5541, the prerequisites are:

- Jour major or jour minor or grad major or IDIM major or ICP major or BIS major

It is useful to have some command of basic research concepts. Also, it is helpful if you have a very basic understanding of the major social psychological theories that have been offered as accounts for behavior. Do not despair if your knowledge of these themes is a little rusty. Our discussions of these themes should give ample learning or rediscovery opportunities.

III. Course Goals and Objectives

The learning objectives of this 3-credit course are to advance the student's familiarity, comprehension, and application of a broad range of mass communication-related facts, concepts, and theories as they apply to public health. These rather abstract goals are reflected in five specific objectives:

1. The student will recognize the transdisciplinary nature of mass communication and public health, and will identify the critical relationships between theoretical ideas from different disciplines, i.e., communication, public health and psychology
2. The student will identify the complex interdependence of critical factors in mass communication of public health, i.e., factors related to audience, environment (e.g., competing and reinforcing media efforts), message, and the health issue at hand.
3. The student will be able to analyze the effects of various media content on the public's beliefs about health issues.
4. The student will be able to write about health communication issues in a compelling manner. This means that the student's writing carefully builds an argument that integrates theoretical notions about communication and health, and applies them to real life issues.
5. Self-discovery: The student will reflect on herself or himself as a scholar, a producer of media health information, and a consumer of media health messages. How do the approaches discussed in this course relate to your individual interests? What are the implications of the planned and unplanned effects of health media information for how you engage with the media?

On average, university policies indicate that students should expect to spend about nine hours per week in learning efforts (inside and outside of class) to satisfactorily complete this course.

IV. Methods of Instruction and Work Expectations

Teaching and learning philosophy

I teach with two ideas in mind. First, teaching is about learning, and learning is an active process. Second, critical thinking, or not taking ideas for granted, is arguably the most significant thing that your college career can help you develop. I therefore will invite discussion wherever I can. It also means that I will invite you to discover implications of course material yourself instead of presenting you with information in a one-way lecture.

Learning thrives on new and unexpected ideas that lead to productive solutions. This is often achieved when differing points of view come together. Diverse viewpoints are valued and differing ideas encouraged. Questions, comments and suggestions are welcome at any time in this course.

Format

Meetings

There will be one or two readings each week. Our meetings will include presentations in which I discuss concepts and theories from the readings. Those presentations will be completely open for questions and discussion. In addition to explanatory discussion, meetings will provide the opportunity for students to share ideas about readings, and presentation and discussion of 'real life' examples of mass communication and public health in action.

Assignments

The readings and meetings are organized around a number of larger topics. Assignments are due for each of these topics. Four of the assignments include two open-ended questions; a knowledge question and an applied question that asks you to address a relevant issue using the knowledge you have gained during discussion of the particular topic. These are 'take home' assignments with strict, and varying but typically short deadlines. A fifth assignment asks you to write a short paper. There will be a longer final paper for which you will integrate much of what you will have learned during the semester.

V. Course Text and Readings

The required readings for this course consist of a number of scholarly articles that you can access through your UMN library account or that will be made available. These are the readings:

- Bandura, A. (2001). Social cognitive theory of mass communication. *Media Psychology*, 3, 265-299.
- Dalton, M. A., Sargent, J. D., Beach, M. L., Titus-Ernstoff, L., Gibson, J. J., Ahrens, M. B., Tickle, J. J., & Heatherton, T. F. (2003). Effect of viewing smoking in movies on adolescent smoking initiation: a cohort study. *Lancet*, 362, 281-285.
- Falck, R.S., Siegal, H.A., Wang, J., & Carlson, R.G. (1995). Usefulness of the health belief model in predicting HIV needle risk practices among injection drug users. *AIDS Education and Prevention*, 7, 523-533.
- Fishbein, M., & Yzer, M. C. (2003). Using theory to develop effective health behavior interventions. *Communication Theory*, 13, 164-183.
- Guttman, N., & Ressler, W.H. (2001). On being responsible: Ethical issues in appeals to personal responsibility in health campaigns. *Journal of Health Communication*, 6, 117-136.
- Hammermeister, J., Brock, B., Winterstein, D., & Page, R. (2005). Life without TV? Cultivation theory and psychosocial health characteristics of television-free individuals and their television-viewing counterparts. *Health Communication*, 17, 253-264.
- Hornik, R., & Yanovitzky, I. (2003). Using theory to design evaluations of communication campaigns: The case of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. *Communication Theory*, 13, 204-224.
- Hornik, R. C. (2002). Introduction. In R. Hornik (Ed.), *Public health communication: Evidence for behavior change* (pp. 1-22). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Katz, E. (1957). The two-step flow of communication: An up-to-date report on a hypothesis. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 21, 61-78.
- Löfstedt, R.E., 2003, Science communication and the Swedish acrylamide "alarm", *Journal of Health Communication*, 8, 407-432.
- Morgan, S.E., Palmgreen, P., Stephenson, M.T., Hoyle, R.H., & Lorch, E.P. (2003). Associations between message features and subjective evaluations of the sensation value of antidrug public service announcements. *Journal of Communication*, 53, 512-526.
- Rucker, D.D. & Petty, R. E. (2006). Increasing the effectiveness of communications to consumers: Recommendations based on elaboration likelihood and attitude certainty. *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, 25, 39-52.

Sargent, J. D., Beach, M. L., Dalton, M. A., Mott, L.A., Tickle, J.J., Ahrens, M.B., & Heatheron, T. F., & Sargent et al. (2001). Effect of seeing tobacco use in films on trying smoking among adolescents: cross sectional study. *British Medical Journal*, 323, 1-6.

Schwitzer, G. (2008). How do US journalists cover treatments, tests, products, and procedures? An evaluation of 500 stories. *PLoS Medicine*, 5, e95.

Soumerai, S. B., D. Ross-Degnan, et al. (2002). The effects of professional and media warnings about the association between aspirin use in children and Reye's Syndrome. In R. Hornik (Ed.), *Public Health Communication: Evidence for Behavior Change* (pp. 265-288). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Yzer, M.C. (2008). The Integrative Model of Behavioral Prediction and message-based HIV prevention. In P.H. Swanepoel & H. Hoeken (Eds.), *Adapting health communication to cultural needs: Optimizing documents in South African health communication on HIV/AIDS* (pp. 49-69). Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Important! We only have one or two readings for each weekly meeting to ensure that you can really think about what you read. *Please read the assigned materials before each class.* Class meetings will demonstrate and extend the information in the readings and provide for student discussion. Simply put: Meetings will not be of much value –and no fun– if you did not read the material before class. **It will be very difficult to do well on the assignments and final paper if you do not read the material before meetings.**

For optimal learning I urge you to also reread the articles directly after class.

VI. Course Outline/Weekly Schedule

<u>Session and Date</u>	<u>Topics and Readings</u>
1. Tuesday, January 20	Introduction: The relation between mass communication and public health Read Hornik & Yanovitzky (2003): pages 204-213
<u>Topic 1: How mass communication might influence us</u>	
2. Tuesday, January 27	Cultivation Read Hammermeister et al. (2005)
3. Tuesday, February 3	Social learning Read Bandura (2001)
4. Tuesday, February 10	Mediation Read Katz (1957)
<u>Topic 2: Understanding public health as a behavioral problem</u>	
5. Tuesday, February 17	Alternative explanations for behavior change Read Falck et al. (1995) <i>Assignment 1 due in class!</i>
6. Tuesday, February 24	An integrative model of behavioral prediction Read Fishbein & Yzer (2003) <i>Stakes are high edutainment example</i>
<u>Topic 3: What to change versus how to change</u>	
7. Tuesday, March 3	To think or not to think; is that the question? <i>Assignment 2 due in class!</i> Read Yzer (2008)
8. Tuesday, March 10	Information processing

Read *Rucker & Petty (2006)*

March 16-20 **SPRING BREAK!**

9. Tuesday, March 24 **Audience = message**
Read *Morgan et al. (2003)*

Topic 4: Effects of formal campaigns

10. Tuesday, March 31 **What can we expect from public health campaigns?**
Assignment 3 due in class!
Read *Hornik (2002)*
A case study
Read *Soumerai et al. (2002)*

11. Tuesday, April 7 **Campaign evaluation 101**
Read *Hornik & Yanovitzky (2003)*

Topic 5: The air we breathe: Media (non-campaign) references to health

12. Tuesday, April 14 **News media**
Read *Schwitzer (2008)*
Read *Lofstedt (2003)*
Assignment 4 due in class!

13. Tuesday, April 21 **The movies**
Read *Dalton et al. (2003); Sargent et al. (2001)*

Topic 6: Ethics

14. Tuesday, April 28 **Ethics of health communication**
Read *Guttman & Ressler (2001)*
Assignment 5 (paper) due in class! NOTE: Assignment 5 is different from the other assignments. See below for guidelines for the paper you are asked to write for assignment 5

15. Tuesday, May 5 **Conclusion – open discussion**
Final paper due!
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VII. Evaluation and Grading

Grading

All assignments will be graded on a 1 – 10 pt scale (10 = perfect score). Those grades are then weighed as follows:

- assignments 1 – 4
(at 12.5% each): 50 % of final grade
- assignment 5 (short paper): 15 % of final grade
- final paper: 35 % of final grade

See course schedule for deadlines.

Student's grades will be based only on that student's accomplishments and that students are not in competition with each other for grades in this course. Final grades are A-F only:

A – outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.

B – significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.

C – meets course requirements in every respect.

D – worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.

F – represents failure, signifies work completed at a level not worthy of credit or not completed.

I (Incomplete) – Assigned at the discretion of the instructor. An incomplete grade will be considered only when documented, extraordinary circumstances beyond control, or ability to anticipate, prohibit timely completion of the course requirements. Incomplete grades are rare and require a written agreement between instructor and student.

Grading scale

Grade	Grade points	Standard
A	4.00	Outstanding
A –	3.67	
B +	3.33	
B	3.00	Significantly above the required level
B –	2.67	
C +	2.33	
C	2.00	Meets course requirements
C –	1.67	
D +	1.33	
D	1.00	
F	0	

Guidelines to graded material

Assignments 1, 2, 3, and 4

We discuss six broad topics in this class. For four of the six topics you are asked to answer two open-ended questions. The first question is a knowledge question that serves to assess whether you understood the conceptual ideas from the readings and class discussion. The second question asks you to use the knowledge you gained to address an applied issue relevant to the topic.

Although the time that you have to answer the questions varies between the six assignments, that time will be relatively short. **Plan carefully!**

Assignment 5: paper (due on 28 April, 2009)

Assignment 5 is a short paper. For this paper you will select a peer-reviewed biomedical or public health article that received media coverage at some point. The assignment requires a careful analysis of the article and a comparison and contrast with the news coverage it received. Papers should be 3 to 4 pages in length (using double line spacing and a 12-point font). Address the following:

1. What was the "news hook" in the article that likely invited media coverage? What aspect made this scholarly article newsworthy?
2. Were the key themes of the news stories the same as those emphasized in the scholarly article itself?
3. Were the stories accurate in describing the study and its results?
4. If more than one story appeared in the media, were there differences among them, e.g., did the *New York Times* present a substantially different story than was available through the *Associated Press*?
5. Was the context of the research reflected in the news stories?
6. Conclude with your own overall evaluation of how well the original research was reported on in the news media. Your conclusion can address possible implications of the news report on the public

A convenient index for identifying journal articles that receive media coverage is provided by the Biomedical Library in [Health & Medicine in the News](#). (But note that this database stopped adding articles in 2007...)

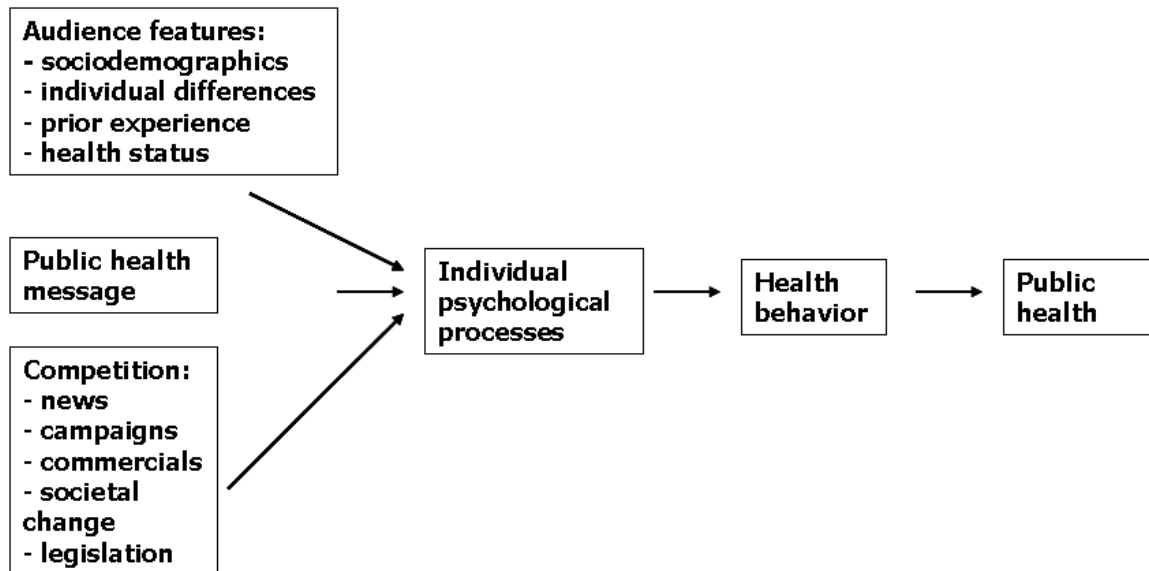
Final paper (due on Tuesday 5 May, 2009)

Please write a final paper of five to eight pages in which you analyze the effects of a health message that has been communicated through the mass media. We interpret a 'health message' very broadly: It can be a planned campaign, a single ad from that campaign, a sitcom episode, a movie, a news release, a PR press release from the government, etc. etc. Your task is to carefully analyze what the effects of the message of your choice are on the appropriate health issue by using the general theoretical framework we use in class (see the figure below).

You need to address

1. **the audience box,**
 2. **the health message box,**
 3. **the competition box,**
- and discuss how these three interact by discussing**
4. **the psychological processes box.**

NOTE: It is **not** enough to just describe each of the boxes. You need to make clear how each of these parts of the health media information process affect each other. This reflects your understanding of health media message effects as a very complex interactive system.



You can submit a short paragraph on your research question and preliminary ideas and ask me to review them. The final paper will be due on 5 May, 2009.

Assignments and make up policy: **Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date indicated.** Any late assignment will be penalized by a 20% score reduction. Requests for no-penalty extensions will be considered only in extraordinary circumstances and, if at all possible, must be submitted to me prior to the due date, i.e., *not on or after the due date*. Re-examinations or compensative assignments are not formally provided.

Class participation: My attendance policy is simple; I expect you to show up to class **on time**. Late arrivals interrupt concentration of other students (and the instructor). Sometimes circumstances beyond our control make us miss a class. In that case, please do notify me of your absence by sending an email. You will not lose points if you miss a class, but realize that assignments draw on material discussed in class.

Course Evaluation

Beginning in fall 2008 the SPH will collect student course evaluations electronically using a software system called CoursEval. The system will send email notifications to students when they can access and complete their course evaluations. Students who complete their course evaluations promptly will be able to access their final grades just as soon as the faculty member renders the grade. All students will have access to their final grades two weeks after the last day of the semester regardless of whether they completed their course evaluation or not. Student feedback on course content and faculty teaching skills are important means for improving our work. Please take the time to complete a course evaluation for each of the courses for which you are registered.

Incomplete Contracts

A grade of incomplete "I" shall be assigned at the discretion of the instructor when, due to extraordinary circumstances (e.g., documented illness or hospitalization, death in family, etc.), the student was prevented from completing the work of the course on time. The assignment of an "I" requires that a contract be initiated and completed by the student before the last day of class, and signed by both the student and instructor. If an incomplete is deemed appropriate by the instructor, the student in consultation with the instructor, will specify the time and manner in which the student will complete course requirements. Extension for completion of the work will not exceed one year (or earlier if designated by the student's college). For more information and to initiate an incomplete contract, students should go to: www.sph.umn.edu/grades.

University of Minnesota Uniform Grading and Transcript Policy

A link to the policy can be found at onestop.umn.edu.

VIII. Other Course Information and Policies

Grade Option Change (if applicable)

For full-semester courses, students may change their grade option, if applicable, through the second week of the semester. Grade option change deadlines for other terms (i.e. summer and half-semester courses) can be found at onestop.umn.edu.

Course Withdrawal

Students should refer to the Refund and Drop/Add Deadlines for the particular term at onestop.umn.edu for information and deadlines for withdrawing from a course. As a courtesy, students should notify their instructor and, if applicable, advisor of their intent to withdraw.

Students wishing to withdraw from a course after the noted final deadline for a particular term must contact the School of Public Health Student Services Center at sph-ssc@umn.edu for further information.

Student Conduct, Scholastic Dishonesty and Sexual Harassment Policies

Students are responsible for knowing the University of Minnesota, Board of Regents' policy on Student Conduct and Sexual Harassment found at www.umn.edu/regents/polindex.html.

Students are responsible for maintaining scholastic honesty in their work at all times. Students engaged in scholastic dishonesty will be penalized, and offenses will be reported to the Office of Student Academic Integrity (OSAI, www.osai.umn.edu).

The University's Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as "plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; or altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying of data, research procedures, or data analysis."

Plagiarism is an important element of this policy. It is defined as the presentation of another's writing or ideas as your own. Serious, intentional plagiarism will result in a grade of "F" or "N" for the entire course. For more information on this policy and for a helpful discussion of preventing plagiarism, please consult University policies and procedures regarding academic integrity: <http://writing.umn.edu/tww/plagiarism/>.

Students are urged to be careful that they properly attribute and cite others' work in their own writing. For guidelines for correctly citing sources, go to <http://tutorial.lib.umn.edu/> and click on "Citing Sources".

In addition, original work is expected in this course. It is unacceptable to hand in assignments for this course for which you receive credit in another course unless by prior agreement with the instructor. Building on a line of work begun in another course or leading to a thesis, dissertation, or final project is acceptable.

Disability Statement

It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, or systemic) that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services to have a confidential discussion of their individual needs for accommodations. Disability Services is located in Suite 180 McNamara Alumni Center, 200 Oak Street. Staff can be reached by calling 612/626-1333 (voice or TTY).