COURSE SYLLABUS
SPECIAL TOPICS – SCIENCE, HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION
MMC 4936 & MMC 5932-RVC

GENERAL INFORMATION

PROFESSOR INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor:</th>
<th>Dr. Weirui Wang</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
<th>(305) 919-4428</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office:</td>
<td>AC2 # 328 (BBC)</td>
<td>Fax:</td>
<td>(305) 919-5215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours:</td>
<td>By appointment</td>
<td>Email:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:weirwang@fiu.edu">weirwang@fiu.edu</a> (preferred)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Website:</td>
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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PURPOSE

The special topics course – Science, Health and Environmental Communication - is an advanced communication course that is designed to introduce students to theory, research, and contemporary concerns in communicating science, health, environmental, and risk (ComSHER). We will address a wide range of topics to introduce you the breadth of issues in this area with an emphasis on strategic communication, media campaigns, digital technology and media influences.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions
- Explain the way representations of nature, environment, health, and risk are politically, socially and economically constructed
- Articulate a critical understanding of basic theories, models and assumptions about the effects of the mass, social and participatory media in ComSHER;
- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics;
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations;
• Develop plans for evaluating media campaigns, appropriately tailored to a variety of communication methods and techniques;
• Analyze the implications of messages conveyed by mass and social media (TV, radio, movies, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) in ComSHER;

ACEJMC CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES TARGETED

• Demonstrate an understanding of the history and role of professionals and institutions in shaping communications;
• Demonstrate an understanding of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and, as appropriate, other forms of diversity in domestic society in relation to mass communications;
• Demonstrate an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society;
• Demonstrate an understanding of professional ethical principles and work ethically in pursuit of truth, accuracy, fairness and diversity;
• Think critically, creatively and independently;
• Critically evaluate their own work and that of others for accuracy and fairness, clarity, appropriate style and grammatical correctness.

TEACHING METHODOLOGY

This is a fully online course in which all of the instructional materials and activities are delivered through Blackboard, and/or other internet-based media. Some exams may require the use of an approved proctoring center. Should you have any questions, please contact the professor.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

POLICIES

Please review FIU's Policies webpage. The policies webpage contains essential information regarding guidelines relevant to all courses at FIU, as well as additional information about acceptable netiquette for online courses.

Below are special policies in this particular class:

• **Electronic communication:** This class will rely on electronic communication. Course materials and assignments will be posted on Blackboard. Students are required to check for electronic messages and postings weekly. It is the student’s responsibility to have a
working email connected with Blackboard and check for messages and postings on Blackboard.

- **Deadlines:** Unless you have a documented excuse, there will be no make-ups or extensions for the exams and assignments. If you cannot turn in the assignment on the due date, you will have to ask permission to complete the assignment before the assigned time period. You will have to ask permission at least two weeks in advance to be granted for this option. For medical or personal emergencies when prior notification is impossible, you must submit the make-up work with appropriate documentations. Please also be advised that you are not allowed to make up any assignment if the deadline has passed more than two weeks. In other words, you won’t be permitted to make up assignments at the end of the semester. Please be responsible of your own learning.

- **Academic honesty:** Student must follow the Standards of Conduct described in the student handbook. (http://www.fiu.edu/~sccr/standards_of_conduct.htm). In course assignments and exams, the use of literature, notes, aids, or assistance from other sources should be clearly stated. Students are expected to use all resources, including books, journals, and computers only in legal and authorized ways. Cheating or plagiarism will result in an automatic F on the related assignment or exam, and possible further disciplinary measures.

- **Student with disabilities:** If you have any special circumstances, please make me aware of them so that you may be better accommodated. For questions and information about support services, please call the FIU Office of Disability Services at 305-348-3532 (University Park Campus: GC 190) or 305-919-5345 (Biscayne Bay Campus: WUC 139).

- **Diversity:** The School of Journalism and Mass Communication (SJMC) fosters an environment of inclusivity and respect for diversity and multiculturalism. The SJMC educates students to embrace diversity and understand the root causes of discrimination, as well as social, ethnic, sexual, disability and gender-based exclusion.

**TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS/SKILLS**

One of the greatest barriers to taking an online course is a lack of basic computer literacy. By computer literacy we mean being able to manage and organize computer files efficiently, and learning to use your computer’s operating system and software quickly and easily. Keep in mind that this is not a computer literacy course; but students enrolled in online courses are expected to have moderate proficiency using a computer. Please go to the [What’s Required](#) page to find out more information on this subject.
Please visit our Technical Requirements webpage for additional information.

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATION

Please visit our ADA Compliance webpage for information about accessibility involving the tools used in this course.

Please visit Blackboard’s Commitment to Accessibility webpage for more information.

For additional assistance please contact FIU’s Disability Resource Center.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

There are no prerequisites for this course.

TEXTBOOK

**Required:**

*Successful Science Communication: Telling It Like It Is*

Editors: David J. Bennett, Richard C. Jennings

Publisher (Year): Cambridge University Press (2011)

ISBN: 978-0521176781

*Health Communication: From Theory to Practice (2nd Edition)*

Required textbook for graduate students (MMC 5932ers) but not for undergraduate students (MMC 4936ers).

Author: Renata Schiavo

Publisher (Year): Jossey-Bass (November 4, 2013)

ISBN: 978-1118122198

**Recommended:**

*The Routledge Handbook of Health Communication (2nd Edition)*

Editors: Teresa Thompson, Roxanne Parrott, Jon F. Nussbaum
EXPECTATIONS OF THIS COURSE

This is an online course, which means all of the course work will be conducted online. Expectations for performance in an online course are the same for a traditional course. In fact, online courses require a degree of self-motivation, self-discipline, and technology skills which can make these courses more demanding for some students.

Students are expected to:
- Review the how to get started information located in the course content
- Introduce yourself to the class during the first week by posting a self-introduction in the appropriate discussion forum
- Take the practice quiz to ensure that your computer is compatible with Blackboard
- Interact online with instructor/s and peers
- Review and follow the course calendar
- Log in to the course once per week
- Respond to discussion and assignments within 7 days
- Submit assignments by the corresponding deadline

The instructor will:
- Log in to the course 2 times per week
- Respond to discussion boards, postings and queries within 7-10 days
- Respond to emails within 7 days
- Grade assignments within 7-10 days of the assignment deadline

COURSE DETAILS

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Communication in this course will take place via Email.

The Email feature is an external communication tool that allows users to send emails to users enrolled within the course. Emails are sent to the students’ FIU email on record. The Email tool is located on the Course Menu, on the left side of the course webpage.
Visit our Writing Resources webpage for more information on professional writing and technical communication skills.

QUIZZES

In order to mitigate any issues with your computer and online assessments, it is very important that you take the “Practice Quiz” from each computer you will be using to take your graded quizzes and exams. It is your responsibility to make sure your computer meets the minimum hardware requirements.

Assessments in this course are not compatible with mobile devices and should not be taken through a mobile phone or tablet. If you need further assistance please contact FIU Online Support Services.

Quiz Expectations:

- Ten reading quizzes throughout the semester.
- **100 points: 10 points X 10**
- Each quiz has 10 multiple-choice questions (1 point per question)
- These reading quizzes assess your comprehension of the reading materials assigned for a particular week.
- Please find 60 minutes within the quiz taking period to take the quiz. You can only open the quiz once and take the quiz once.
- **There are NO MAKE-UPS for each quiz. If for any reason you find technical difficulties with the quiz, please contact Blackboard support immediately. If support cannot help you, they will send me a note and only with this note I will be able to open it up for you for re-take. Make sure you take the quiz between the working hours of Blackboard support in case you have a problem (9 am-5 pm Monday to Friday).**

DISCUSSION FORUM

Discussion Forum Expectations:

(Please note the points for this assignment are different for undergraduate and graduate students)

MMC 4936ers (undergraduate students):
- **150 points: 5 points X 15 (DF original post) + 5 points X 15 (DF reply post)**
You are requested to participate in posting on discussion forums every week.

For each week, you need to complete a **DF original post**:
- Some short-answer questions and case studies will be posted in discussion forums to facilitate your engagement in the class and mastery of the class materials. You are asked to answer the questions in your original post.

For each week, you also need to complete a **DF reply post**:
- You are requested to reply or comment on at least one of your classmates’ original post.

**MMC 5932ers (graduate students):**

- **120 points: 4 points X 15 (DF original post) + 4 points X 15 (DF reply post)**
- You are requested to participate in posting on discussion forums every week.
- For each week, you need to complete a **DF original post**:
  - Some short-answer questions and case studies will be posted in discussion forums to facilitate your engagement in the class and mastery of the class materials. You are asked to answer the questions in your original post.
- For each week, you also need to complete a **DF reply post**:
  - You are requested to reply or comment on at least one of your classmates’ original post.

**LEADING DISCUSSION**

**Leading Discussion Expectations:**

- You will lead discussion on class materials of one of the 15 weeks.
- To lead discussion, you need to create a presentation (e.g., youtube, powerpoint with voice over, or other format), which includes the following content:
  - Summaries of the readings
  - Examples of concepts, models, approaches discussed in the readings
  - Questions you propose for your peers to discuss
- Please note that each module/week starts on Monday and ends on Sunday. Students are usually given the entire week to study the materials and most assignments are due on Sunday (e.g., discussion forum, quizzes). However, if you are the discussion leader, your presentation is due on the **Sunday before the module/week starts** so that your presentation can be used to guide your peers’ learning. For example, if you are the discussion leader of module 2 (1/18-1/24) Ethics of science communication, your presentation is due on 1/17 before the module starts.

**BLOG ABOUT YOUR OWN TOPIC**
Please note this assignment is required only for graduate students (MMC 5932ers)

Blog about Your Own Topic Expectations:

- **30 points**
  - In module 14, you are asked to choose a topic of your own interest and complete (or even develop) your own readings for this week. Please write a blog entry to reflect your critical thinking about the topic you choose. Please make sure the blog entry not only summarizes what you read, but also integrates the reading and your observations on daily practices of ComSHER.

ASSIGNMENTS

Final Project Assignment Expectations:

- **Final project assignments – 200 points in total**
  - Five graded assignments will be posted to help you understand and apply important concepts taught in this class with a specific deadline. These five assignments are successive.
    - Assignment 1: Organizational Analysis and Understanding the Communication Objectives
    - Assignment 2: Identifying the publics
    - Assignment 3: Dealing with the media and writing the press release
    - Assignment 4: Screening the media coverage
    - Assignment 5: Developing a media campaign
  - Tentative schedule of these graded assignments is specified in the course calendar below.
  - Requirements for each assignment will be posted throughout the semester.

GRADING

**MMC 4936:**

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<td>• Assignment 3: Dealing with the</td>
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<td>• Assignment 4: Screening the</td>
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Your grade will not be rounded up. You get a B+ if you get 464.9 points in total.

**COURSE CALENDAR**

**Important note to students:**

Please make sure you check the module objectives and to-do-list on Blackboard every week. Exam and assignment schedule will be articulated in more details in the objectives and to-do list section of each module/week as the semester progresses. The following is a tentative schedule including the tentative topics, and reading list for students, which is subject to change.

**Tentative Schedule**

**Module 1 1/11-1/17**

Introduction, syllabus reading & introduction to science communication

**Course Level Objectives**

- Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions
- Explain the way representations of nature, environment, health, and risk are politically, socially and economically constructed

**Module Level Objectives**

- Articulate the difference between the “public understanding of science” approach and the “science and society” approach
- Recognize key reports, initiatives and turning points underlying each approach as well as implications/assumption associated with these initiatives (e.g., Bodmer Report, BSE crisis, COPUS)
- Describe the importance of involving upstream public engagement
- Explain the foundations of implementing genuine public engagement
• Recognize the key scientists, professionals and institutions in science communication through the ages
• Compare how the demonstration and communication of science has been changed through the ages
• Analyze the effectiveness of these approaches of science communication through the ages
• Conduct LexisNexis research on media coverage of science issues

To-Do List

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 1 & 2  
Chapter 1 Deficits and dialogues: science communication and the public understanding of science in the UK  
Chapter 2 Explaining the world: communicating science through the ages

Module 2 1/18-1/24  
Ethics of science communication

Course Level Objectives

• Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions  
• Explain the way representations of nature, environment, health, and risk are politically, socially and economically constructed

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 3 & 7  
Chapter 3 Science, truth, and ethics Richard Jennings  
Chapter 7 The ethos of science vs. ethics of science communication

Module 3 1/25-1/31  
Language and public understanding

Course Level Objectives

• Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions  
• Explain the way representations of nature, environment, health, and risk are politically, socially and economically constructed
Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 4, 5 & 6
Chapter 4 The public's view of science
Chapter 6 Not 100% sure? The 'public' understanding of risk
Chapter 5 The common language of research (*Recommended, not required reading)

Module 4 2/1-2/7
Dealing with media I

Course Level Objectives

- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics;
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 10 & 11
Chapter 10 Dealing with the media
Chapter 11 Dealing with the U.S. media

Module 5 2/8-2/14
Dealing with media II

Course Level Objectives

- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics;
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations

Module Level Objectives
To-Do List

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 16 & 17
Chapter 17 Nanotechnology and the media – front page or no story?
Chapter 16 Finding the right words: How to shine in radio and television interviews

Assignment 1 Due

Module 6 2/15-2/21
Public interest organisations

Course Level Objectives

- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics;
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 12, 13 & 14
Chapter 12 Relations with public interest organisations: consumers
Chapter 13 Relations with public interest organisations: patients and families
Chapter 14 Relations with environmental organisations: a very personal story

Module 7 2/22-2/28
Implementation and Evaluation

Course Level Objectives

- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations

Module Level Objectives
**To-Do List**

Read Bennett & Jennings (2011), Chapters 20, 25 & 26  
Chapter 26: Evaluating success: how to find out what worked (and what didn't)  
Chapter 20: Dealing with dilemmas and societal expectations: a company's response  
Chapter 25: 'Imagine': a communication project putting life sciences in the spotlight

Assignment 2 Due

**Module 8 2/29-3/6**  
Health communication and mass media

**Course Level Objectives**

- Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions  
- Explain the way representations of nature, environment, health, and risk are politically, socially and economically constructed  
- Articulate a critical understanding of basic theories, models and assumptions about the effects of the mass, social and participatory media in ComSHER

**Module Level Objectives**

**To-Do List**

Read Schiavo, Chapters 1 & 5  
Chapter 1 What Is Health Communication?  
Chapter 5 Mass Media and New Media Communication, and Public Relations

**Module 9 3/7-3/13**  
Planning, implementing and evaluating a health communication program I

**Course Level Objectives**

- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics  
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations;  
- Develop plans for evaluating media campaigns, appropriately tailored to a variety of communication methods and techniques
Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Read Schiavo, Chapters 10, 11, 12
Chapter 10 Overview of the Health Communication Planning Process
Chapter 11 Situation and Audience Analysis
Chapter 12 Identifying Communication Objectives

Assignment 3 Due

Module 10 3/14-3/20
Spring break: No class.

Module 11 3/21-3/27
Planning and implementing and evaluating a health communication program II

Course Level Objectives

- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics
- Formulate a strategic plan for a focused communications strategy and provide a rationale for the selected communications strategy, reflecting both scientific and practical considerations;
- Develop plans for evaluating media campaigns, appropriately tailored to a variety of communication methods and techniques

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Read Schiavo, Chapters 13 & 14
Chapter 13 Designing and Implementing an Action Plan
Chapter 14 Evaluating Outcomes of Health Communication

Module 12 3/28-4/3
Health public relations and advertising

Course Level Objectives
• Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions
• Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics
• Analyze the implications of messages conveyed by mass and social media (TV, radio, movies, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) in ComSHER

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Routledge Handbook of Health Communication, Chapters 9 & 17
Chapter 9 Relationship building and situational publics: Theoretical approaches guiding today’s health public relations
Chapter 17: Advertising in health communication: Promoting pharmaceuticals and dietary supplements to U.S. consumers

Assignment 4 Due

Module 13 4/4-4/10
Environmental communication and mass media

Course Level Objectives

• Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions
• Explain the way representations of nature, environment, health, and risk are politically, socially and economically constructed
• Articulate a critical understanding of basic theories, models and assumptions about the effects of the mass, social and participatory media in ComSHER

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, Chapters 1 & 6
Chapter 1 Speaking for and about the Environment
Chapter 6 News media and Environmental Journalism

Module 14 4/11-4/17
Choose your own topic and readings week

Course Level Objectives

- Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environment and health issues and solutions
- Articulate a critical understanding of basic theories, models and assumptions about the effects of the mass, social and participatory media in ComSHER
- Think strategically about the use of communications to advance a public organization’s goals and objectives in ComSHER and identify the strengths and weaknesses of different communication tactics
- Develop plans for evaluating media campaigns, appropriately tailored to a variety of communication methods and techniques
- Analyze the implications of messages conveyed by mass and social media (TV, radio, movies, Facebook, YouTube, etc.) in ComSHER

Module Level Objectives

To-Do List

You are going to choose one topic below based on your own interests and complete the suggested readings for the topic. You can also develop your own topic and reading list by talking to your professor.

Topics to choose from:

1. Entertainment education
2. Persuasion-based approaches to health communication
3. Social media in communicating science, health, environment and risk
4. Environmental journalism
5. Green marketing and corporate campaigns

Module 15 4/18-4/24
Final Project Workshop

To-Do List

Students work in groups to complete the final campaign. No reading for this week.

Module 16 4/25-5/1

To-Do List
Final Campaign Presentation – Assignment 5 Due