Instructor: Julie Andsager  
Office hours: Tuesday 1:30-3, Wednesday 1:30-3, or by appointment  
phone: 319.335.3428  
Office: W329 AJB

Course objectives
> To be able to identify health-related topics, appropriate audiences, and accurately convey information in meaningful ways.
> To be able to read and understand studies published in medical and other peer-reviewed journals.
> To be able to interpret health-related statistics and explain them to audiences.
> To develop an understanding of the roles of different medical professionals and how best to communicate with them.
> To communicate with patients, healthcare professionals, and the public ethically and sensitively.

Required textbooks


Other readings are posted on the course’s ICON site.

Administrative home
The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the administrative home of this course and governs matters such as the add/drop deadlines, the second-grade-only option, and other related issues. Different colleges may have different policies. Questions may be addressed to 120 Schaeffer Hall or see the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Electronic communication
University policy specifies that students are responsible for all official correspondences sent to their University of Iowa e-mail address (@uiowa.edu). Faculty and students should use this account for correspondences. (Operations Manual, III.15.2. Scroll down to k.11.)

Academic fraud
Plagiarism and any other activities when students present work that is not their own are academic fraud. Academic fraud is a serious matter and is reported to the departmental DEO and to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum. Instructors and DEOs decide on appropriate consequences at the departmental level while the Associate Dean enforces additional consequences at the collegiate level. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

CLAS final examination policies
Final exams may be offered only during finals week. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. Students should not ask their instructor to reschedule a final exam since the College does not permit rescheduling of a final exam once the semester has begun. Questions should be addressed to the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum.
Making a suggestion or a complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit the instructor, then the course supervisor, and then the departmental DEO. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident. See the CLAS Student Academic Handbook.

Accommodations for disabilities
A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet privately with the course instructor to make particular arrangements.

Understanding sexual harassment
Sexual harassment subverts the mission of the University and threatens the well-being of students, faculty, and staff. All members of the UI community have a responsibility to uphold this mission and to contribute to a safe environment that enhances learning. Incidents of sexual harassment should be reported immediately. See the UI Comprehensive Guide on Sexual Harassment for assistance, definitions, and the full University policy.

Reacting safely to severe weather
In severe weather, class members should seek appropriate shelter immediately, leaving the classroom if necessary. The class will continue if possible when the event is over. For more information on Hawk Alert and the siren warning system, visit the Public Safety website.

*These CLAS policy and procedural statements have been summarized from the web pages of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and The University of Iowa Operations Manual.

Absences
You are expected to attend every class meeting. If you are sick, please contact me via email or phone before or during the class meeting (9:30-11:20 a.m.) to make arrangements to make up any assignment or quiz that you miss that day. If I don’t hear from you until later, I will assume that you simply chose not to attend, and therefore you will not be able to make up the points. If you must miss class for a University-sponsored activity, you must provide a memo from the person in charge (e.g., the Student Athletic Services, debate coach, etc.) explaining your absence. If you must attend a funeral, you must bring a folder from the service to show me afterward. If you know you will miss class for other reasons, such as attending a wedding or interviewing for a job, please contact me ahead of time so we can arrange for you to make up the points.

When you are given the opportunity to make up a quiz or assignment for any reason, you must do so within one week of the original deadline. Otherwise, points will be deducted for tardiness.

Deadlines and late penalties
Health writers must strictly adhere to deadlines, and so must you. Any assignment that is not posted on ICON by its deadline will begin to lose points immediately. Unless otherwise stated on the assignment instructions, the deadline will be 11:20 a.m. on the day the assignment is due. Five percent will be deducted from the assignment’s grade if the assignment is turned in the same day before 5 p.m.; after that, 10% of the score will be deducted each day it is late. For example, if a story is due Wednesday in class but is not turned in until Thursday at 6 p.m., 20% would be deducted. If it is turned in on Thursday before 5 p.m., 10% would be deducted.

A blog post is due each week. The week begins on Monday at 9:00 a.m. and ends the next Monday at 8:59 a.m. Any post that appears after 8:59 a.m. on the next Monday will be considered late and points will be deducted in the manner described above.
Assignments
Choose a topic that you’ll return to throughout the semester; you’ll become an expert on it. It may be the reason you’re taking this class. You will be developing the topic from various angles – new studies; environmental issues; affected populations; business/policy issues. Therefore, your topic should be either:

- a clinical condition (disease or medical) – more specific than “cancer”;
- a specific population – pregnant women, people over 65, African Americans (though that is pretty broad);
- a policy-related area – health disparities; nutrition; environmental health; the FDA.

Over the course of the semester, you’ll be tracking your topic through others’ blogs, news stories, new studies, tweets, etc. You will be writing your own material and blogging on a wordpress.com site.

For all assignments, use Associated Press style. Correct spelling, grammar, punctuation, and accuracy are required in everything you produce.

Each week, we will do two things: 1) Cover a specific writing/research issue in the readings, and 2) discuss a relevant health topic, such as epidemics, mental illnesses, special populations, etc. We will devote class time nearly every day to work on writing and research, but you will still need to spend some time outside working, as needed.

Health blog – Each week, write at least one blog post about something related to health and the media. To give your blog a purpose, use your topic as the focus. You might comment on news stories (with links to them), advertising or health campaigns, etc. You should definitely write about our guest speakers and field trips and what you learned from them. Minimum: 15 posts, one per week, following the guidelines we will discuss.

New study – Find a newly published article reporting a new study in a peer-reviewed medical journal and write a news story about it for a general audience. (about 300 words)

Feature story – Write a 1,000-word feature story on an interesting aspect of your topic. Include original sources (patients, doctors, policy people, etc.) and statistics as needed. This should be a focused piece that would be useful for a publication such as the Health section of a large newspaper or a periodical.

Audio story – Go back to the study you wrote about earlier. Write a story “for the ear” – it could be used as a short podcast or a radio piece, as on NPR. What kinds of sound would you use, if any? Include a description of those in the transcript. This should be about 2 minutes long.

Sidebar – Produce a fact-based sidebar for your feature story. Use data you find on websites we have covered as trustworthy. Include a basic graph to visually display a relevant statistic (e.g., diabetes incidence rate by race/ethnicity; obesity rates over time, etc.). The sidebar should be 150 words plus graphic. (These last 3 paragraphs are 156 words, not including this sentence.)

Weekly quizzes – Every Monday, we will have a short quiz (4-5 questions) over the readings assigned for the week. (For the week of Sept. 7, the quiz will be on Wednesday due to Labor Day.) We will drop your 2 lowest scores in calculating this portion of your final grade.

In-class assignments – Several short assignments will be done during class, such as writing a tweet, making an information graphic, etc.
Submitting assignments
This is (mostly) a paper-less class. All assignments, except for blog posts, must be submitted electronically through the course ICON site. Dropboxes will be set up for each assignment; be sure you upload to the correct dropbox. Assignments must be saved in .docx format – no .pdfs. Weekly quizzes will be done online through the ICON site’s quiz feature. Blog posts will be graded as they appear on your blog, with comments sent to you via ICON.

Grading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Minimum points needed for:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog (10 pts/post)</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>A+ 487.5; A 462.5; A- 450.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New study</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>B+ 437.5; B 412.5; B- 400.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature story</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>C+ 387.5; C 362.5; C- 350.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio story</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>D+ 337.5; D 312.5; D- 300.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidebar</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>F 299.9 or lower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly quizzes</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-class assignments</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>500</td>
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</tbody>
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Grades will be based on the quality of the product you turn in for each assignment, including blog posts. Spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors will cost 10% of the assignment’s grade each. Accuracy errors will cost 20% each. Plagiarism or other academic fraud (as defined above) will result in a zero for the assignment. Late assignments will be treated as described above under Deadlines and late penalties.

Tentative schedule (be sure that you read each assignment before class on Monday, because there will be a short quiz over the readings each week)

Aug. 22-24  introduction, finding topics – Gastel, chapters 1 and 3; Woloshin et al., pp. 1-8
Aug. 29-31  reading medical journals, Gastel, chapter 2; research methods, chapter 6
Sept. 7     continue research methods; Woloshin et al., chapters 8-10
Sept. 12-14 health literacy – Zarcadoolas et al.,* chapters 3-4 (on ICON)
Speaker: Pharmacy Practice and Science
Sept. 19-21 genres – Gastel, chapters 8 and 9
Sept. 26-28 targeting audiences – Gastel, chapter 7
Oct. 3-5    interviewing – Gastel, chapter 4
Oct. 10-12  conveying risk -- Woloshin et al., chapters 1-3
            Wednesday speaker: Nursing
Oct. 17-19  sensitive issues – Gastel, chapter 10
            Wednesday speaker: Community Mental Health Center
Oct. 24-26 using Twitter – online readings from ICON
   Monday speaker: Deborah Shelton, Chicago Tribune

Oct. 31-Nov. 2 secondary data analysis – online readings from ICON
   Thursday: trip to Pharmacology lab, Bowen Science Bldg.

Nov. 7-9 visuals – Morgan et al., chapter 8

Nov. 14-16 calculating benefits – Woloshin et al., chapters 4 and 5
   Wednesday Speaker: VERB

Nov. 21-23 no class – Thanksgiving break

Nov. 28-30 ethics – Gastel, chapter 16

Dec. 5-7 wrapping up

Final exam period: Friday, Dec. 16, 7:30 a.m. – All materials must be completed by this time. Anything I have not received by 7:30 a.m. will receive a score of zero.


Iowa Dozen
The UI School of Journalism and Mass Communication believes that the following knowledge and skills are essential for our majors. We will be incorporating many of these throughout this course, especially those marked by *.

We learn...
- to write correctly and clearly*
- to conduct research and gather information responsibly*
- to edit and evaluate carefully*
- to use media technologies thoughtfully*
- to apply statistical concepts appropriately*

We value...
- First Amendment principles for all individuals and groups
- a diverse global community
- creativity and independence*
- truth, accuracy, fairness, and diversity*

We explore...
- mass communication theories and concepts
- media institutions and practices
- the role of media in shaping cultures