Media and Health

Instructor: Rachel Young, PhD, MPH
Office: W333 Adler Journalism Building
Office hours: Monday 9:30-11:30 am; Wednesday 1:30-3:30 pm
Email: rachel-young@uiowa.edu
Course website: icon.uiowa.edu

Course Description

This course will draw on perspectives from a range of disciplines, including public health, medicine, psychology, and mass communication, to investigate how health topics are portrayed in the media and the relationship between mediated health messages and audiences. In doing so, structural components of the media will be discussed as means of framing or limiting our understanding of health through news, entertainment, and advertising content.

Be aware: During this semester, we will discuss topics that some of you may find disturbing. I may use video clips from various sources as examples and points of departure for our discussions. All of these materials come from news, mainstream, or educational media. Prior to viewing, I'll try to announce any possibly sensitive images. If at any time you feel uncomfortable with such imagery or topics, please put your head down or leave the room. The purpose of these discussions and visuals is not to shock but to critically examine mediated communication about health.

Course Objectives

This course requires analysis, critical thinking, and application of theories and themes to concrete examples. It does not require memorization or recitation of facts. You should develop a facility with concepts relevant to health media such as stigma, risk, framing, health determinants, and social comparison and you will apply those concepts in class discussion and in your written work. You will write in class almost every week. The overall goal of the course is for you to build your confidence as a theoretical thinker and an academic writer.
By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Understand how the practices of the media and of scientific professions affect public knowledge of health
- Examine how the framing of science and medicine by the news and entertainment media shapes health beliefs and behaviors.
- Understand how public discourse operates to socially construct diseases and those affected by them
- Investigate how access to audiences via digital technology has changed the landscape for health media
- Read and interpret medical studies and information.

Course Materials


Additional assigned readings are posted on the course ICON website.

Course Requirements
Students are expected and required to attend classes regularly, participate in class discussion, and submit all assignments on time. Late submission will be penalized. No exams will be given but several papers and a poster presentation are required.

Assignments
All assignments, unless otherwise specified, should be submitted via Dropbox.

In-class writing (130 points)
Nearly every week we will do an in-class writing assignment related to that week’s readings. Some weeks you will be given an assignment on Monday and asked to turn it in Wednesday. Assignments will be graded according to the rubric provided on ICON. You will be allowed to bring in a page of handwritten or typed notes from the readings. You will not be able to make-up these assignments, but you can drop your lowest three scores.

Book reports (120 points)
This is a group assignment and is based on the two books, *On Immunity* and *Complications.* Each of you will read the books at your own pace. During two weeks of the semester, you will get together with 3-4 of your classmates to discuss the book and write up a joint book report. The report and consequent class discussion will constitute the grade for this assignment.

Health news story (150 points)
Create a print news story based on a medical journal article. The format is up to you, and you only need to choose one format. Select a single medical journal article of your choice. You can find articles by searching databases like GoogleScholar or by searching the websites for specific journals on topics you’re interested in. Once you’ve chosen an article, figure out
which points you think are most newsworthy, and write a brief article, using a typical news story format. Language should be simple, jargon-free, and easily understandable for a general news audience. Print articles should be no longer than 500 words. You will also write up a one-page, single-spaced, critical analysis of the process: What was most challenging aspect? What do you think you did well, and what could be improved? How are the goals and language different for journal articles and health news stories? You’ll turn in your story, the one-page critique, and the original journal article to Dropbox. You’ll be graded on how accurately you summarize the article, the appropriateness of your tone and language for a general audience, adherence to length restrictions, and the thoughtfulness of your critique.

**Health media review (250 points)**
Choose a disease, condition, or health behavior. You’ll choose a theory discussed in class and examine mass media, social media, entertainment, or strategic messages related to the topic. Your review should be 4 to 6 pages long and should include links to stories within the body of the text.

**Health information research project (250 points)**
You will pose a research question related to the topic selected for your health media review and use interviews or a survey to answer your question. Because of the size of this project, it can be done individually or with one or two other students from the class. The requirements will be the same either way and if students decide to collaborate, they will receive the same grade.

**Presentation of findings (100 points)**
Present the findings from your media review paper and the research project to your classmates. This presentation of the two earlier assignments that has two main goals: 1) develop your skills of summarizing and presenting complex information visually and orally, and 2) share with your classmates the most interesting findings of your research. This will be a conference-style oral poster presentation during the last week of the semester.

**Graduate student assignment (250 points)**
Graduate students will be required to complete an additional assignment. Details will be provided within the first month of the semester.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points possible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-class writing</td>
<td>130 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book reports</td>
<td>120 points</td>
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<td>Health news story</td>
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<td>Health media review</td>
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<td>Research project</td>
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<td>Presentation</td>
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<td><strong>Graduate students only</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Grad assignment</td>
<td>250 points</td>
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**Grading Scale**

Final grades will be computed using the scale below (Please note: No A+).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>95% - 100%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90% - 94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87% - 89%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83% - 86%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80% - 82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77% - 79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73% - 76%</td>
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<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70% - 72%</td>
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<td>D+</td>
<td>67% - 69%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63% - 66%</td>
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<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60% - 62%</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>Below 60%</td>
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**Course Expectations**

**Workload**

Although some work will be done in class, you are also expected to spend time outside of the classroom on the readings and assignments. The CLAS student workload guidelines advise that each semester hour of class time should entail around two hours each week of outside preparation for the average student. This means that in a 3-semester-hour course like this one, students should expect 6 additional hours of outside work per week on average.

**In-class behavior**

It goes without saying that you are expected to behave in a professional manner throughout the course with your instructors and peers. This includes:

1. coming to class on time and not leaving early;
2. turning off your cell phone or putting it on silent/vibrate;
3. closing and putting away your laptops unless they are needed for a class activity;
   there are no tests, slides are shared via ICON, and you can use pen and paper for class notes if necessary; laptops have been shown to be distractions to you and your fellow students and to impede learning, especially in a discussion-based class.

**Attendance**

I will keep a record of your attendance and expect you to be here every day. When you miss class, you miss the work we do on those days. I understand that some time during the term you may be sick or have an important obligation that keeps you from class. Let me know in advance when you can, but please note that all absences, for whatever reason, factor into your final grade as outlined below. My job is to evaluate your work in class, not to evaluate your reasons for missing it. However, if you find that a serious health or other problem is affecting your work, please talk with me—sooner rather than later—about how to handle course obligations. Also talk with me if a class meeting
interferes with a religious observance. If you miss class, you are still responsible for any schedule changes announced. Check ICON and be in touch with a classmate to find out what went on in your absence.

- Missing 4 classes will lower your final grade to the next step down (e.g., B+ to B)
- Missing 5 to 6 classes will lower your final grade a full letter grade (e.g., B+ to C+)
- Missing 7 or more classes is grounds for failure

Assignments
Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned day. Assignments that are late will lose one letter grade per day, beginning at the start of class and including weekends and holidays. This means that a paper which would have received an A if it was on time will receive a B the next day, C for two days late, and so on.

I allow students to re-submit work within two weeks of receiving their graded papers. New assignments will be re-graded as long as students meet with me in advance and substantially revise the original work. There is no guarantee you'll receive a better grade on a re-submitted assignment, and you may only use this option on one assignment per semester. This option is not available for your thought papers.

I will run all assignments through plagiarism detection software available through ICON. The software makes a preliminary report available to you when you turn in the assignment. Please turn in your work with enough time to review this report. Students may unintentionally copy others’ work. However, since I cannot assess whether plagiarism is intentional or unintentional, all work that copies others’ words without proper attribution will be considered plagiarized and will receive an automatic zero. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism please carefully review the syllabus. If you still have questions, please make an appointment to meet with me.

Language and style in graded work
We are in the journalism school, so spelling, grammar, clarity and style, and punctuation are part of grades, both in formal and informal writing. I cannot stress enough the importance of good writing for non-journalism students too. Writing skills are transferable to any field of work/study and will always be beneficial to you regardless of your professional plans for the future. I am a stickler for grammar and style, so I would advise you to take advantage of that.

Online communication
I am always happy to answer any e-mails with questions, comments or concerns. However, they should be sent through your Hawk e-mail account, as outlined in the CLAS policy. I will respond to your e-mail in a timely manner (within 24-48 hours). On weekends, e-mail responses might be slower. I expect to see proper e-mail etiquette. This is another soft skill that you should develop early on in your careers and that will help you tremendously later on. Please, don’t address me on e-mail with “hi,” “hey,” “hey girl,” “Mrs.” or “Miss” or even worse, no greeting at all, when you initiate an e-mail conversation.
These are two good websites to guide you on proper way to write e-mails, not just for this class, but for the rest of your career:

http://www.career.vt.edu/jobsearchguide/email.html#dearwhom
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/636/01/

University/CLAS Policies

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 Academic Policies Handbook at http://clas.uiowa.edu/students/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, k.11).

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. See www.uiowa.edu/~sds/ for more information.

Academic Honesty
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College’s Code of Academic Honesty: “I pledge to do my own academic work and to excel to the best of my abilities, upholding the IOWA Challenge. I promise not to lie about my academic work, to cheat, or to steal the words or ideas of others; nor will I help fellow students to violate the Code of Academic Honesty.” Any student committing academic misconduct is reported to the College and placed on disciplinary probation or may be suspended or expelled (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

Code Offenses
The following are examples of offenses against the Code of Academic Honesty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Many of these categories overlap. Offenses are not limited to this list and include other types of cheating, misrepresentation, and dishonesty. If you have questions, please ask your instructor for guidance.

Cheating
- using notes or texts during a quiz or exam when not permitted by the instructor
- using a cell phone or other technology to find information or to copy questions and answers to use or for others to use for an exam or quiz
• allowing others to assist in the completion of your quiz, exam, homework, paper, or project when not permitted by the instructor
• copying someone else’s exam, homework, or laboratory work
• allowing others to view your answers or to copy your work and submit it as their own
• not following the guidelines specified by the instructor for an assignment or for a “take home” test

Plagiarism
• claiming the words, sentences, arguments, rhetorical structures, or ideas of another as your own
• “borrowing” or copying a friend's lab report, homework, research data, or essay and presenting it as your own
• failing to use quotation marks when required
• failing to cite sources when appropriate
• submitting any materials as your own that were created or written by someone else

Misrepresentation
• providing false information about reasons for class absences when requesting a make-up for a quiz, exam, or homework
• making up statistics or facts
• making up references or quotations for academic work, including for a works cited page
• accepting credit for a group project without doing your share of the work
• submitting the same paper in more than one course without the knowledge and approval of the instructors involved
• reusing a paper written during another semester or at another institution
• failing to provide full information regarding academic performance or enrollments from other courses or institutions

Forgery
• altering a score, grade, or schedule change on an academic record
• signing the name of an instructor, advisor, dean, or another student without proper authorization
• falsifying University correspondence or a student identification card

Facilitating academic dishonesty
• helping or attempting to help someone commit an act of academic dishonesty, such as helping a fellow student do a take-home exam, giving answers to an exam, or collaborating with others on work that is supposed to be completed independently

Consequences of Code Offenses
Academic dishonesty diminishes the reputation of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and faculty’s intention of serving all students fairly and equally. It harms your fellow students, potentially hurting the classroom experience while undermining the worth of your own achievements.

1. Instructors in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) may fail any assignment showing evidence of academic dishonesty.
2. Instructors report all incidents of academic fraud to the College, following the procedures outlined at this link.
3. After the College receives the incident report, the College takes the following action:

   For a first offense: The student is placed on disciplinary probation until graduation or until a period of five years from the period of the probation. A notation does not appear on the student's permanent record/transcript for a first offense. However, the violation is kept internally on file until the student graduates or for five years, whichever is sooner. If the student is planning to receive a degree from a UI college other than CLAS, that college is notified of the action taken. The student’s advisor, the involved instructor, the DEO of the instructor, and other appropriate persons are notified of the violation.

   For a second offense: The student is suspended from the College for one calendar year and is not allowed to register at the University during that time. A second offense is recorded on the student's permanent record/transcript during the period of suspension as follows: “Not permitted to Register: Academic Misconduct.” This notation is removed when the suspension is completed. CLAS maintains an internal record of the offense until the student graduates or until five years have passed, whichever is sooner. For a third offense: The Dean of the College recommends to the University President that the student be expelled from The University of Iowa. Once expulsion occurs, the offense is recorded on the student's permanent record/transcript as follows: “Not permitted to Register: Academic Misconduct.” The report of academic misconduct becomes part of the student’s permanent record kept in the Office of the Dean of Students.

   CLAS will report the action taken to the student, to the academic advisor, to the instructor finding the fraud, and to the appropriate DEO. If the student placed on disciplinary probation is planning to receive a degree from a UI college other than CLAS, that college also will be notified of the action taken. If CLAS finds that the academic fraud is minor in nature, a student will receive a letter of disciplinary warning and the report will be filed until the student graduates or for five years, whichever is sooner. CLAS internal records concerning first and second offenses are destroyed when the student graduates or after five years. Internal reports for a third offense become part of the permanent student record kept in the Office of the Dean of Students.

If you have questions about academic fraud and its consequences, please contact the Office of the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum, 335-2633.

CLAS Final Examination Policies
The final examination schedule for each class is announced by the Registrar generally by the tenth day of classes. Final exams are offered only during the official final examination period. No exams of any kind are allowed during the last week of classes. All students
should plan on being at the UI through the final examination period. Once the Registrar has announced the date, time, and location of each final exam, the complete schedule will be published on the Registrar's web site and will be shared with instructors and students. It is the student's responsibility to know the date, time, and place of a final exam.

Making a Suggestion or a Complaint
Students with a suggestion or complaint should first visit with the instructor (and the course supervisor), and then with the departmental DEO, David Ryfe (david-ryfe@uiowa.edu). Complaints must be made within six months of the incident (CLAS Academic Policies Handbook).

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 Department of Public Safety website.

THE IOWA DOZEN

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
**Tentative Schedule**

This is a tentative course outline. Throughout the semester, changes might be necessary. Any changes will be announced immediately on ICON.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic, Readings, Assignments</th>
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| Week 1  
21 January | Introduction and approaches to media and health |
| Week 2  
26-28 January | Thinking through theory  
**Reading**  
- Goodson, “Theory as practice: Thinking theoretically”  
- *New York Times*, “Why colleges haven’t stopped binge drinking”  
  [http://nyti.ms/1Gn7L7o](http://nyti.ms/1Gn7L7o) |
| Week 3  
2-4 February | Framing health news  
**Reading**  
- Reese, S. D. “Framing public life.” Pp. 1-13 only (stop at the Newseum case study)  
- Fox News, “African agents may visit witch doctors, not hospitals.” (video clip on ICON)  
  [http://tinyurl.com/onwndsr](http://tinyurl.com/onwndsr)  
- Fox News, “These are the facts”  
  [http://tinyurl.com/pzsynqy](http://tinyurl.com/pzsynqy) |
| Week 4  
9-11 February | Translating health evidence  
**Reading**  
- Fecht, S. “What can we do about junk science?” *Popular Science*.  
- BBC News. “So is cancer mostly bad luck, or not?”  
| Week 5  
16-18 February | Defining and constructing illness |
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<td>Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6 23-25 February</td>
<td>Social comparison</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Corcoran, K. “Social comparison theory.”</td>
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<td><strong>Health news story due to Dropbox by the beginning of class on Monday</strong></td>
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<th>Week 7 2-4 March</th>
<th>Stigma</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Friendman, R. “Weight bias: a social justice issue.” Rudd Policy Brief.</td>
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<td>• Link, B. “Stigma and its public health implications.” <em>The Lancet.</em></td>
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<td>• North, A. “Shamed, flamed, and harassed: What it’s like to be called fat online” <em>New York Times.</em> <a href="http://tinyurl.com/oshatn3">http://tinyurl.com/oshatn3</a></td>
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<th>Week 8 9-11 March</th>
<th>Persuasion for health</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Thomas, R. “Introduction to health communication.” <em>Health Communication.</em> Pp 1-7</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Bayer, R. “Stigma and the ethics of public health: Not can we, but should we.” <em>Social Science and Medicine.</em></td>
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<td>• Lederman, L. “A case against ‘binge’ as the term of choice: Convincing college students to personalize messages about dangerous drinking.” <em>Beyond These Walls: Readings in Health Communication.</em></td>
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| Week 9 16-18 March | Spring break, no class |
| Week 10 | 23-25 March | Book club, week 1  
Readings  
- Biss, E. *On Immunity*  

**Book report due to Dropbox by midnight on Friday, March 27** |
|---|---|---|
| Week 11 | 30 March - 1 April | Entertainment education and social learning  
Readings  
- Crosby, A. “Social cognitive theory applied to health behavior.” |
| Week 12 | 6-8 April | Depictions of race, culture, ethnicity in health media  
Readings  
- Brodie, M. “Perceptions of Latinos, African Americans, and Whites on media as a health information source.” *Beyond These Walls: Readings in Health Communication.*  

**Health Media Review due to ICON by the start of class Monday** |
| Week 13 | 13-15 April | Social media and the changing role of patients  
| Week 14 | 20-22 April | Medicine as entertainment  
- Korowny, C. “Televised medical talk shows—what they recommend and the evidence to support their recommendations.” *British Medical Journal*  
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<th>Week 15</th>
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<tr>
<td>27-29 April</td>
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<td>Book club week 2: Complications</td>
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<td><strong>Wednesday</strong>: Group book report due to Dropbox at the end of class</td>
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<th>Week 16</th>
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<tr>
<td>4-6 May</td>
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<td><strong>Round I of presentations on Monday</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Round II of presentations on Wednesday</strong></td>
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<th>Finals Week</th>
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<tr>
<td>11-13 May</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Health Research Report due during class final exam time</strong></td>
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