Course Name: Strategic Health Care Communication
Course Term/Number: JMC:5267:0EXW (019:267:EXW)

Instructor: Bruce Japsen
Phone: 773-497-6252
Email: bruce-japsen@uiowa.edu
Additional contact information: brucejapsen@gmail.com
DEO Contact Information: David-Ryfe@uiowa.edu

Course Meeting time: Wednesday 5:30 pm to 8 pm

Required Course Materials:
Instructor will provide handouts, exercises and reading materials. There is no required textbook but instructor will offer those who need to refresh newswriting skills some resources and books such as:

- Health Care Terms, a book by Deborah and Virgil Slee (optional)
- A Medical Dictionary (optional)

Course Description:

Medical care spending is $3 trillion a year in the U.S., accounting for one in every six dollars spent in the U.S. economy and growing even before the Affordable Care Act legislation was signed into law eight years ago by President Obama. Yet this large and important system is confusing, complex, expensive and difficult to understand.

Because health care is not written and communicated so consumers can understand it, people suffer injuries and even death from medical errors, while doctors and insurance companies that cannot convey their messages
in easy-to-understand ways result in a frustrated public at large. All of this costs money and endangers lives.

What is the difference between an ACO and a PPO and how do you write that in a way that people will know whether to buy that plan over an HMO? If a patient is “treatment-naïve” for the HIV virus, why don’t medical researchers simply write that the test results turned up “negative?” The difference between Medicare and Medicaid is that one plan provides medical benefits to elderly and the other to poor Americans, but most do not even know this because it has never been explained to them effectively.

While learning and being refreshed upon basic writing and information-gathering through instructor handouts, videos, texts, lectures and guest speakers, students will also spend time doing research and interviews necessary to write stories, speeches or memos to help fellow health professionals, businesses and the public at large.

Students will also practice and study how to write and edit across all platforms whether they be print, digital or broadcast outlets. They will learn to write about health care and medical issues in a more understandable, organized and convincing manner. Students will also study the writing of others.

Student goals will be accomplished through lectures, guest speakers, readings and writing assignments.

**Learning Objectives:**
The goal of this course will be to break down medicine, related science and health care for the average person, writing and communicating about it in an understandable way.

We will spend a good part of the semester studying and examining healthcare consumers, their costs and frustrations and the Affordable Care Act, or what has come to be known as Obamacare. You’ll find that just getting health insurance is a small part of this law and changing it, gutting it or getting rid of has only added to its complexities. But we will also study, work and write about things in the news as the course happens. As one
example, we will look at Amazon’s potential entrance into healthcare or what this fall’s mid-term elections mean to healthcare or the ACA.

Grading Criteria:

Attendance/participation: 35%
In Class Exercises And Outside ClassQuick Turnaround Writing Assignments: 40%
Final Exam: 25% (5% is development of idea/outline/memo)
*The Class Will Be Based on 1,000 points (ie: Attendance/Participation is 300)

Assignment Descriptions:
We will have three or four graded assignments plus in-class practice exercises. Assignments will not be long because the idea is to make healthcare simple and easy to understand. Brush up on your inverted pyramid. 500 to 750 words will be on the long side of what we write. 400 words or less will be the norm.

Participation and attendance policy:
Attending and participating during our Wednesday evening course time is critical. Speakers will be invited in from across the country.

I will NOT record sessions as a general rule. There may be a rare exception. Plan to attend class. Past speakers have come from NPR, the NYTimes, Walgreens, CVS Health, Aetna, Blue Cross insurers, the Obama administration, the American Medical Association and various health policy organizations and lobbies. We also include projects students may be working on for their jobs if they are relevant to healthcare.

Assignment deadlines and late work policy:

Deadlines are critical in my class. Don’t miss them. For every day an assignment is late, it drops a FULL letter grade. And the grade continues to fall another letter for each and every 24-hour period. If an assignment is due at 5 pm on a Friday and comes in at 5:01, an A falls to a B and so forth.

Email Policy:
I will respond to your e-mails usually within the hour, if not sooner. I expect the same.

Format of the course:
Material and subject matter will be timely. If we have a speaker, we will often write about what they say and write it during class or have it due within a day or two after class. Course is heavy on guest speakers and real-time relevant issues. Assignments will flow from week to week and guest to guest.

Student Resources
IT Email: dce-techsupport@uiowa.edu

ICON Student Guide and Technical Resources

Student Zoom Accounts
University of Iowa Writing Center

Grading Scale:
A 94-100  A- 90-93  B+87-89  B 83-86  B- 80-82  C+ 77-79  C 73-76  C- 70-72  D+ 67-69  D 63-66  D- 60-62  F 59-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week/Date</th>
<th>work /reading due prior to class</th>
<th>Class discussion Topic</th>
<th>Preparing for our next session</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aug. 29</td>
<td>Read National Public Radio's (NPR) Shots column/blog and be familiar with NPR content online and</td>
<td>Healthcare communication/news in the digital age. NPR healthcare editor to speak.</td>
<td>Instructor to advise from week to week</td>
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<td>Week 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<td>Sept. 5</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Check out Kaiser Health News, STAT News, Healthleaders, Modern Healthcare</td>
<td>NPR healthcare editor to speak. (this week if not Week 2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 12</td>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Review story from previous week. Your first graded story will have been due. (Instructor will provide subject and topic, most likely from a speaker)</td>
<td>Getting rid of jargon from healthcare will be our topic. We will invite a speaker from a startup medical device maker. She will talk in industry-speak. It will be up to us to get her to break it down and explain it so you can write a release or promotional brochure or related marketing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept. 19</td>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Check out media and press section of <a href="http://www.cms.gov">www.cms.gov</a></td>
<td>Medicare and Medicaid. These vast government insurance programs will be explained.</td>
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<td>Sept. 26</td>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Come prepared with a verbal outline or memo to discuss assignments thus far</td>
<td>Individual conferences</td>
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<td>Oct. 3</td>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Come prepared with a verbal outline or memo to write</td>
<td>Individual conferences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
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<td>Oct. 10</td>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>discuss assignments thus far</td>
<td>Midterm (a second graded story) will be due.</td>
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<td>Oct. 17</td>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>(Possible speaker from Health Grades, national company that provides quality info on doctors)</td>
<td>Medical Care Providers and quality measurement.</td>
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<td>Oct. 31</td>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Medical care providers and the changing landscape. How do we write about physician issues in a skeptical way. Also talk about growth of allied health professionals like Nurse Practitioners and</td>
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<td>Nov. 7</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
<td>Examples of promotion of medical journals like New England Journal of Medicine and JAMA (Journal of the American Medical</td>
<td>Medical journals, Healthcare professional journals to be discussed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Events</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 14</td>
<td>Week 13</td>
<td>Individual conferences. Meetings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 29</td>
<td>Week 14</td>
<td>Individual conferences. Meetings</td>
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<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>Week 15</td>
<td>Final story is due. Instructor available during class window</td>
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<td>Final</td>
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<td>Your final will be due the last week of class. See Dec. 5 note.</td>
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<td>Information</td>
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<td>Instructor available all week for individual meeting in digital classroom to review or discuss your final paper.</td>
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**University of Iowa Teaching Policies and Resources**

**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 [https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook](https://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](https://clas.uiowa.edu/students/handbook)).

**Accommodations for Disabilities**
The University of Iowa is committed to providing an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a
disability (which includes but is not limited to mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related conditions). A student seeking academic accommodations should first register with Student Disability Services and then meet with the course instructor privately in the instructor's office to make particular arrangements. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between the student, instructor, and SDS. See [https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/](https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/) for information.

**Nondiscrimination in the Classroom**
The University of Iowa is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University’s Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity, [diversity@uiowa.edu](mailto:diversity@uiowa.edu), or visit [diversity.uiowa.edu](http://diversity.uiowa.edu).

**Academic Honesty**
All CLAS students or students taking classes offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College’s [Code of Academic Honesty](https): "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](https://www.clas.uiowa.edu/academics/student-services/academic-policies-handbook)).

**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. Complaints must be made within six months of the incident ([CLAS Academic Policies Handbook](https://www.clas.uiowa.edu/academics/student-services/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 [Office of the Sexual Misconduct Response Coordinator](https://sfs.uiowa.edu/diversity) 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.