

SPPH 552 – Risk and Communication in Public Health (3 credits)

Thursdays 12:00 – 3:00, SPPH 143

Instructor: Dr. Jennifer Gardy, jennifer.gardy@bccdc.ca. Office hours: by request.

Course Objectives: In SPPH 552, students will be introduced to general aspects of science communication as well as the theory and practice of risk communication in public health. The ultimate goal of the course is to provide students with practical experience in crafting clear, concise, and appropriate public health messages for a range of audiences, and specific course objectives include: improve practical communication skills, including writing and visual communication; understand the Hazard vs. Outrage framework for risk communication, identify which quadrant best describes the audience for a given exercise in communication, and select and use the right tools to reach each type of audience; and, through case studies, analyze real-world examples of successful and unsuccessful public health risk communication.

Learning Outcomes: By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Understand and employ the principles underlying effective scientific writing
- Understand how concepts from the field of information visualization can be applied to communicate scientific and health information visually
- Explore how to communicate health information in creative, non-traditional ways
- Determine how the technical aspects of a risk and the public's perception of that risk influence how we design and deliver risk communication messages
- Utilize different health behavior change frameworks and models to create public health communication plans
- Design a public health communication intervention for a specific target audience

Course Format: SPPH 552 meets weekly for an interactive lecture/discussion section. Readings and slides will be made available in advance of the week's lecture via the course's Connect site, and each lecture will combine an instructor-led discussion of the material with small group work focused on practical use of the concepts from the week's lecture.

Course Requirements: No prerequisites.

Assessment, Evaluation, and Grading: SPPH 552 is graded on a percentage basis and includes five assignments and a participation mark. There are no examinations in the course. A breakdown of the evaluation is provided below:

Assignment	Value
1 – Writing: You will select a specific audience from a list provided by the instructor (e.g. university students, a parents group, a Minister of Health, etc...) and, using a press release provided by the instructor, write a one-page document explaining the content of the press release to the audience of your choice. Use the principles for effective science writing and understanding audiences discussed in class to make your document clear, concise, and interesting.	10 marks
2 – Slide design: You will be provided with a deck of PowerPoint slides that have been poorly designed. Choose one of the slides in the deck and give it a	10 marks

makeover using the principles discussed in class around presenting data visually and designing effective slides.	
3 – Creative communication: You will create a one-page pitch document describing a creative way to communicate a science or health topic of your choosing – don't be afraid to go way outside the box!	10 marks
4 – Outrage assessment: Using the principles established by Peter Sandman's Hazard vs. outrage framework, conduct an outrage assessment on the public health topic assigned by the instructor. You may choose to assess this in any way you like - decide on your ratings yourself, poll a friend, try to get a sense of the landscape through public postings on the internet, etc. In addition to the outrage assessment worksheet (10 marks), provide a brief justification for each element (10 marks).	20 marks
5 – Intervention design: The final assignment in the course will integrate everything we've discussed to date. You will draft a health communication-style plan describing an intervention that you hope will move an audience of your choice along the precaution adoption process model stages. Some of the questions you might want to address include: how does step 1 of health communication apply here (planning, strategy development)? Who is my audience? What do I know about them and how to reach them? What stage of the PAMP are they at? Where do I want them to be? What are my messages? What materials do I need to develop? How can I track the success of my intervention? You might choose to use a health communication template like those suggested by the Pink Book, or draft your own format for the project plan. Marking scheme: Have you articulated the who - who is your audience? 10 marks Have you articulated the how - what intervention have you developed? 15 marks Have you articulated the why - what are your reasons for choosing this intervention strategy? 10 marks Is the assignment clearly written and professionally presented? 5 marks	40 marks
Participation: Your participation in the class (regular attendance, active participation in discussions, asking questions) will be evaluated by the instructor (5 marks) and your peers (5 marks).	10 marks

Course Schedule and Required Readings:

Week 1	No class – Many SPPH students attend the UBC/SFU/UW Semiahmoo Public Health Conference this week.
Week 2	Introduction to the course <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skelton C. 2007. How much risk do you live with? The Vancouver Sun. • Sandman PM. 2012. Chapter 1: Risk = Hazard + Outrage. In Responding to Community Outrage: Strategies for Effective Risk Communication Pp. 1-12.
Week 3	The written word <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gopen G. & Swan C. 1990. The science of scientific writing. American Scientist.
Week 4	Communicating visually

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Munzner T. 2009. Visualization. In Fundamentals of Graphics, Shirley and Marschner, eds. Pp. 675-707.
Week 5	Creative communication <i>No readings</i>
Week 6	Health communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Department of Health and Human Services. 2004. Making Health Communication Programs Work: A Planner's Guide.
Week 7	No class – Midterm break
Week 8	Risk communication I: Introduction, Talking About Risk <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sandman PM. 2012. Chapter 2: Components of Outrage. In Responding to Community Outrage: Strategies for Effective Risk Communication. Pp. 13-75.
Week 9	Risk communication II: Outrage management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burgess DC, Burgess, MA, Leask J. 2006. The MMR vaccination and autism controversy in the United Kingdom 1998-2005: Inevitable community outrage or a failure of risk communication? <i>Vaccine</i>. 24:3921-3928. • Crisis and
Week 10	Risk communication III: Crisis communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US Department of Health and Human Services. 2014. Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication.
Week 11	Risk communication IV: Precaution advocacy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weinstein ND, Lyon JE, Sandman PM, Cuite CL. 1998. Experimental evidence for stages of health behavior change: the precaution adoption process model applied to home radon testing. <i>Health Psychol</i>. 17(5):445-53. • Glik DC et al. 2014. Using the Precaution Adoption Process Model to describe a disaster preparedness intervention among low-income Latinos. <i>Health Educ Res</i>. 29:272-83.
Week 12	Behaviour change frameworks (with guest speaker) <i>Readings TBD by guest</i>
Week 13	Communicating around vaccines (with guest speaker) <i>No readings</i>
Week 14	Scenarios in public health risk communication/Q&A (with faculty guests) <i>No readings</i>