Graduate Health Communications Certificate

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Cancer Institute define health communication as

“The study and use of communication strategies to inform and influence individual decisions that enhance health.”

The Graduate Health Communications Certificate program will prepare students to write, design, and edit a variety of communications, create instructional materials and health campaigns, and work in health advocacy.

Departments

This certificate is offered jointly through the departments of Communication and English & Comparative Literature, Professional Writing in the McMicken College of Arts & Sciences.

Requirements

Completion of the certificate requires 14 credit hours:

- COMM 6089 Introduction to Health Communication, a 2-credit online course
- 4 additional 3-credit courses
  - 1 theory course
  - 1 technology course
  - 2 electives chosen from the offerings of either department

Students must take a minimum of one course from each department. At least one course from each department will be offered each term. Relevant courses from the two departments are listed below.

Duration

Students can complete the certificate in one year.

Career Opportunities

Graduates work in a variety of fields, including:

- Health communications
- Patient services
- Nonprofit publishing
- Medical writing
- Grant writing
- Technical writing
- Public relations
- Human resources
- Patient advocacy
- Information services
- Web editing
Courses from the Department of Communication

COMM 8010: Seminar in Organizational Communication: Power and Politics
This graduate seminar examines the role of power and conflict in organizations. The course will focus on the foundational role of communication in constituting the power relationships that enable and constrain organizing processes. Students will link theories of power and communication with organizational practices that produce standards of knowledge, identities, authority relationships, and taken-for-granted norms, as well as resistance and transformation.

COMM 8056: Seminar in Communication, Science, and Technology
This course examines the role of communication and rhetoric in science. While people usually consider science as a specialized knowledge-producing activity, it has a broader symbolic aspect that can be analyzed and critiqued. We will consider questions, such as "What do arguments, narrative and metaphor have to do with scientific knowledge and practice?", "What is at stake in asking these questions?" and "What is at stake in the various assumptions behind those questions?" Modern science has significant authority and has become dispersed into many aspects of human experience, including politics, health, education, and religion. To appreciate this, we will bring a rhetorical perspective to science, and examine language use in the sciences (and the relation of that language use to other prominent features of science like its social organization and material context.

COMM 8057: Advanced Topics in Communication Organizational Issue Management And Public Health
This seminar will focus on the organizational politics of public health. The course will consider the communicative influence of corporations, public health organizations, and health social movements on public health, health policy, and social knowledge. Course goals include understanding the implications of strategic issue management and persuasion for democratic discourse, and gaining insight into the role of corporations, government, and nonprofits in debates about health and corporate social responsibility.
COMM 8058: Seminar in Risk Communication
This course is designed to provide students a survey over of risk perception research from several perspectives through a general survey of different approaches to risk communication spanning individual, organizational, institutional, social and cultural levels.

COMM 8067: Seminar in Environmental Communication
The course provides students with an in-depth understanding of theoretical and critical concepts and issues related to the emerging field of environmental communication.

COMM 8068: Seminar in Health Communication: Provider-Patient and Caregiving Communication
This course explores communication theory and research within the current U.S. Healthcare context. The course examines issues surrounding the communicative construction of health and health care adequacy, the changing communicative relationship between healthcare consumers and medical practitioners, as well as, the communicative impact of uncertainty in illness, stress, coping, and social support as individuals, families, and societies at large deal with disease and illness.

COMM 8069 Seminar in Health: Communication: Culture, Meaning, and Power
The class addresses the ways that language and culture constitutes the meaning of health and illness and the influence of those constructions on our personal, embodied experiences of health and healing as well as institutional and policy outcomes. Students analyze the role of communication in constructing beliefs about health and illness, and compare biomedical models of disease with sociocultural and critical approaches to health promotion. The class investigates how globalization may co-opt notions of "culture" to perpetrate unequal power relations in the area of global public health and how various publics negotiate and resist those power relations.
Courses from the Professional Writing Program,
Department of English and Comparative Literature

PWRT6021 Instructional Design
This seminar introduces students to principles of verbal and visual design as they apply to instructional/educational materials, both in print and online. It teaches how to analyze audiences, gather information, design information structure and access, and test results in order to produce usable, user-centered documents.

PWRT6023 Reports and Proposals
Students in reports and proposal writing will learn about the genre and process of writing reports and proposals. Students will be introduced to the content and format of reports, such as the memo report, statistical report, analytical report. Topics will include understanding the process of locating funding opportunities, determining persuasive appeals, and writing and editing proposals. Students will be introduced to scholarship and research funding databases. Coursework will involve readings, request for proposal summaries, and writing and editing proposals. Projects may be client focused.

PWRT 6025 Information Graphics and Document Design
Students will focus on the procedures for creating information graphics from different data sources and designing visually appealing and effective documents, for both print and online. Students will practice analyzing audience, designing information graphics and texts for readability, integrating graphics and media, testing usability, and presenting text and media in document designed for a specific audience and purpose. Projects may be client focused.
PWRT 7028 Online Documentation

From static pdf delivery to html to Robohelp to wikis, online documentation will take students through a variety of delivery methods for getting documentation into the hands of users via the Internet. By exploring, analyzing, and discussing the pros and cons of online documentation systems/softwares, you can be better prepared to make decisions or to argue for decisions in the workplace. Throw into those discussions project timelines and all of sudden it’s not about software but getting a job done. In short, the main goal of online documentation: to figure out how to manage a complex online documentation project and then do it.

PWRT 7040 Rhetoric and Texts

This course provides an intensive introduction to classical rhetorical theory and its later developments, particularly as a background for contemporary theories of written, visual, and online discourse. An awareness of the multiple rhetorical traditions that formed during this time provides a way to understand the diverse, competing rhetorical paradigms that have existed throughout the history of rhetoric, and that continue to inform contemporary rhetorical theories, practices, and pedagogies.

PWRT 7042 Environmental Writing

Students will perform an extensive exploration of the discourses used in discussions of environmental problems and their social, political, and economic impacts at the local, national and international levels. The course will include components in environmental health communication and risk communication, as well as environmental impact statements, public documents requesting public input on environmental issues, or public relations documents for organizations whose business involves some form of environmental impact. The class will consider different philosophical approaches to the environment and humans’ relations to the natural world.
PWRT 7043 Science and Health Writing
In this course, students will learn a range of writing and communication strategies used in the practice of science and health so that they can write for general audiences about subjects from these areas. Class readings and discussions will focus on audience, style, and conventions, as well as different genres of science and health writing. Students will also critically examine how popular discourse changes our understanding of the practices of science, medicine, health, and the social consequences of this discourse.

PWRT 7045 Principles and Practices in Web Design
Students will learn concepts and techniques of web design including standards-compliant web page creation using X/HTML and CSS, web usability and accessibility. Students will gain hands-on experience in several tools and apply the theoretical knowledge to a comprehensive project. Projects will be client focused.

PWRT 7047 Technology in Health and Medicine
Students in this course are introduced to the concepts, theories, and technologies that impact health and medicine. Through a combination of analysis and production, students will explore how people are obtaining, using, and understanding health information. The course may focus on patients/consumers, health care providers, and/or third party providers to examine the increasing connections between technology, healthcare, and medicine. The course will cover topics such as the development and implementation of Web strategies, including the options for various tools and technologies, specifically the processes for selecting, using, managing, and evaluating the effectiveness of Web technologies for health communication, including the legal and ethical issues raised by new technologies. Technology categories covered include Web sites, social networking, blogs, discussion forums, e-learning, and webcasts.

PWRT 7048 Rhetoric of Medicine and Health
Students will be introduced to the social construction of health and medicine and the role that rhetoric plays in that formation. Topics and issues to be explored include: metaphor in medicine and health; narrative and its impact on health care; representations of "normal" health and medical treatments; concerns about embodiment; and pain and suffering.