PROSPECTUS UPPER-DIVISION
UNDERGRADUATE COURSE SYLLABUS

Rhetoric of Health, Medicine, Science, and Technology

Fall 2017
Hybrid (On-Site/Online) Course

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This an upper-level undergraduate course with a service-learning component in technical writing, medical rhetoric, and eHealth technologies. In this course, students will learn how to digitally compose technical documentation designed to promote health literacy and wellness. A key component of this course includes the integration of a multimodal digital composition. Students will first rhetorically and critically evaluate health interventions and multi-modes of communication used in the technical writing of electronic medical texts and technologies. Students will then collaborate in teams to engage with a local community healthcare organization, facility, or agency to work on “real” technical writing projects that bring about social change and improved health.

LEARNING OUTCOMES and COURSE DESIGN

By the end of the semester students will demonstrate an understanding of learned concepts and strategies in technical writing for medical or health-related research including assessment of rhetorical situation, writing, design, ethics, culture, collaboration, and applied technologies. Students will first conduct a community literacy needs assessment of health interventions, then choose an electronic mode of communication (eHealth or mHealth) and genre/topic to create a final health literacy deliverable. Students will then apply critical thinking skills in written eHealth communication that challenge, extend, and problematize key aspects of texts and mobile technologies, and emphasize digital composing practices.

HIMSS defines eHealth as "the opportunity to improve health outcomes through the delivery of innovative medical and health services with information and communication technologies.” However, medical rhetoricians argue about what definition actually applies to eHealth services research and communication. Some rhetoricians say that eHealth broadly covers electronic and digital processes in the electronic presentation and communication of health whereby others say the terms mHealth and eHealth are interchangeable. As we progress through the course, students need to consider the following questions:

1. What is (e)Health communication, and what role do technical writers play in the documentation of eHealth or mHealth content?
2. What kinds of accessibility and usability issues surround the writing, design, and delivery of eHealth information?
3. How do eHealth technologies affect the social and digital composing practices of users in the workplace?

COURSE OBJECTIVES
1. **Critically think** about written discourses in eHealth, medicine, and technology.
2. Understand models in technical and health writing relevant to design strategies in the development of eHealth and mHealth texts and technologies
3. Articulate potential ethical issues in written health communication and literacy
4. Create a final deliverable that identifies a problem or need that can be communicated through eHealth or mHealth texts and technologies.

**REQUIRED TEXTS AND TECHNOLOGIES**


**Additional Texts** (excerpts provided by instructor)


NOTE: Reading assignments that are not included in the above list for required or additional texts will be available through the course or university library website. We will also be using a course Twitter for weekly discussions.

**LEARNED OUTCOMES**

At the end of this course, a successful student will have gained competence in the following areas:

1. Familiarity with and understanding of key research texts, theoretical concepts, and methodologies in medical rhetoric, written health and technical communication, and related areas.
2. Ability to engage in intelligent and meaningful scholarly discussions on the topics covered in the course.
3. Understanding of key principles and techniques related to the conduct of research in health communication and interdisciplinary research more generally.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance: Class attendance is required. Excessive unexplained absences will reduce your final course grade. If you know that you need to miss class, please let me know ahead of time if possible. If you do not complete an assignment, it constitutes an automatic failure for the course regardless of standing grade.

Assignments: You must complete all required assignments (listed above) to receive a passing grade in the course. Late papers are not accepted unless you make prior arrangements with me.

Plagiarism and Academic Honesty: Do not turn in someone else’s work as your own. All work must be done by you. Failing to adhere to these guidelines constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

Failure to document sources and/or correctly integrate material into your written assignments is also considered plagiarism. Whenever you incorporate material from an outside source, whether electronic or print, you must document the source of this material and you must quote, paraphrase, or summarize the material correctly.

Any form of plagiarism or academic dishonesty will result in an automatic “0” for the assignment. At the instructor’s discretion, it may also result in an “F” for the final course grade and punishment by the university.

Extenuating Circumstances: If at any time during the semester, personal crises prevent you from performing to the best of your abilities in the course, please notify me as early as possible. Before making exceptions to any of the policies stated in this syllabus, I have the right to request appropriate documentation. This might include letters from physicians, counselors, and/or academic advisors.

Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities can expect instructors to make appropriate accommodations. Please contact me early in the semester if this applies to you.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT

Your overall grade is calculated on a 1000 points scale for the following required assignments. Each assignment is related to one or more of the course outcomes, as indicated.

50 Weekly Twitter Discussion (10 Tweets x 5 points/each)— Tweet about a trending topic in the news related to eHealth or mHealth communication, health literacy, and/or technologies. Reply tweet to 5 of your classmates. [Relates to Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4].

25 Case Study Analyses: Course Discussion Forum (5 pts/each)

200 Research Methods Students will use several methods to collect research in preparation and support of their Writing/Design Project proposal.

   Rhetorical and Genre Analysis: mHealth and eHealth modes of communication for delivery of health literacy

   Interview with Client/Medical Professional: Importance of health literacy and written communication in the workplace
Community Needs Assessment: Create and distribute a digital survey using Google Forms.

200 Proposal of Writing/Design Project Student teams will propose a digital mode of e-communication (web, mobile app) and literacy topic for the creation of an accessible, user-friendly eHealth or mHealth literacy guide designed for a local community or healthcare organization/facility (client) e.g. elderly, disability, food and nutrition, health and wellness, etc. Students will work with the client to write and design technical documentation targeted for a specific user/audience.

200 Final Writing/Design Project Student teams will create an eHealth literacy guide for a client using a multimodal genre of choice (mobile, web, interactive web). The guide must be both instructional and informational, and rhetorical situation appropriate based on client and user needs.

25 Journal Reflection (weekly entries - due at the end of semester with final project) Students are required to keep a reflective journal about the client project’s writing, design, and communication process.

100 Poster Presentation (Digital or Print): Students will present their posters to their service-learning clients in a conference-room setting.

200 Final: Overall reflection of course learning outcomes and deliverables. Slidedoc/SlideShare format.

Oral Participation All students start out with 100% participation credit. If you do not participate in an assigned activity or homework, your overall grade will be deducted 5 points per missing activity. This also applies to class discussion and preparedness for in-class work. You are expected to keep up with the reading assignments, to come to class well prepared, and to make thoughtful, relevant contributions to class discussion. The participation grade I assign as part of your final grade will reflect my perception of your success in these areas. [Relates to Outcomes 1, 2].

COURSE CALENDAR
(15 Weeks 2x/week)

IC=in-class activity HW=homework activity
Note: See course website for Segal – HRM excerpt readings

I. Introduction to Course: What, Why, and How of Rhetoric of Medicine
Medical Rhetoric and Writing (Weeks 1-2)
Readings: Segal – HRM (Introduction); Writer/Designer-WD; Writing Health Communication-WHC
Topics/Questions:
What is medical rhetoric?
What is the difference between “medical” and “science” writing?
What is multimodality or multiple modes of communication?
Where does technical writing fit within the health sciences?
What does eHealth and mHealth mean?
What are Multimodal Projects?
Activity: Choosing a team, client, literacy need, and mode of communication

II. Ethics and Culture: eHealth Communication (3-4)
Readings: WD; HRM (TBA)
Rhetorical situation: Understanding audience, culture, and context
IC Activity: Case study analysis (Ethics - Dombrowski)

III. Narrative and Expressive Writing (5-7)
Reading: HRM (TBA); Opening Up by Writing It Down-OUWD
- Emergent interactive narrative
- Electronic Support Groups
- Illness and Diagnosis Narratives
- Personal Health Records
- Digital Narratives (in medical work e.g. EMR/EHR)
HW Activity: Case study analysis - electronic support groups (TBA)

IV. Research Methods (Weeks 8-9)
Readings: WD; WHC; HRM (excerpts)
Topics:
- Analyzing multimodal projects: Rhetorical and Genre Analysis
- Identifying modes of communication: Choosing a genre
- Audience needs assessment, interviews, and survey
IC: Writing/Research Workshop

V. Developing Evidence-based Content for Health Promotion (10-11)
Readings: WHC
- Mapping change
- Computer-tailoring of health promotion messages
IC Activity: Case study analysis – online medical/health information services
IC: Writing Workshop

VI. Writing for Health Content (Weeks 11-12)
Readings: WHC; MP; HRM
Topics:
- Making written materials easy to understand and use
- Design choices based on mode of communication
- Drafting and Revising
IC: Writing Workshop

VII. Writing and editing Workshop (Weeks 13)
VIII. Presentations (Week 14)
IX. Final Presentations (Week 15)