SYLLABUS

English 5382: Theory and Research in the Written Discourses of Health and Medicine
Online course
Fall 2014

Instructor: Dr. Amy Koerber
Office: 363-D
E-mail: amy.koerber@ttu.edu

Course meetings: Th 6-7:30 pm Lubbock time (central time zone)
Office Hours: 2-4 pm Tuesday
Available by appointment for Skype or phone calls
(e-mail me to arrange a time)

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This graduate course introduces current theory and research in medical rhetoric, health communication, and related areas of inquiry. Although the primary focus is scholarship in technical communication and rhetoric, the course also includes some texts from other disciplines that take an interest in medicine such as communication studies, sociology, and anthropology.

Specifically, the course syllabus is built around questions such as the following:

- What is health communication, and how does it relate to other areas of technical communication research?
- What are the distinct contributions that researchers in technical communication and rhetoric can make to interdisciplinary conversations about medicine and other aspects of healthcare (i.e. health policy, pharmaceutical research & development, the medical device industry)?
- What research methods are appropriate for studying health communication?
- What obstacles do we face in trying to communicate technical communication research findings to health care practitioners and other interdisciplinary audiences?
- What kinds of accessibility and usability issues surround the design and delivery of health information?
- What are the pedagogical issues involved in teaching communication skills to health care professionals and to technical communication students interested in health communication?

TECHNOLOGIES AND CLASS FORMAT
For our weekly synchronous meetings, we will use Skype. If you don’t already have a free Skype account, you will need to get one. Please add a picture to your profile, and keep in mind that is what your classmates will see during the 1.5-hour class session each Thursday evening. You might want to purchase a headset with microphone as that
sometimes improves the sound quality of the call, but it’s also acceptable to use your computer’s built-in microphone and speakers. If you aren’t using a headset, and you’re in a location with a lot of background noise, you will need to mute your microphone when you are not speaking.

For our class website, we will be using a WordPress blog. You will need to have a free WordPress account, and I’ll provide everyone access so they can add and edit content on that site.

Every week, I will provide lecture notes that I expect you to read. The lecture notes will include discussion questions, and they will include a list of tasks that I expect you complete each week before class. Sometimes these notes might include updates on the reading assignments or changes in the syllabus, so you should plan on reading these notes each week before you begin reading the assigned texts. I will plan on making these notes available each week no later than the Sunday evening prior to our Thursday evening Skype meetings.

REQUIRED TEXTS
You will have to purchase the following texts for the course:


In addition to these books, several required readings will be available either as digital files through the course Web site or through the e-journals section of the TTU Library Web site.

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 and theoretical concepts in medical rhetoric, health 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.
4. Improved ability to research a topic in health communication and write a scholarly article reporting research results.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT
Your grade will be based on 1000 points, based on the following required assignments. Each assignment is related to one or more of the course outcomes, as indicated. I’ll provide more detailed information on each assignment as we get closer to it.
Weekly blog responses (250 points total, 10 weeks @ 25 points/week)—Due Wednesday evening 10 p.m. for each week that we have assigned readings. You may post your response as a blog entry in the appropriate place for each week (just do it as a new post and then select the appropriate category from the drop-down menu). I will provide some guiding questions that you can use to prompt your writing. Each written response should be 400-500 words, and it should provide a thoughtful, well-supported response to one or more of the questions. You may also address other questions as well, and you are encouraged to pose your own questions that we can then discuss in class. You will notice we actually have 11 weeks of assigned readings in the syllabus, and you’re only required to do 10 of these blog responses. That means you can take one week off—your choice, so I’d suggest saving it for one of the extra busy weeks later in the semester [Relates to Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4].

Formal Proposal for Research Paper (100 points)—For this assignment, you will write a detailed proposal outlining your plans for the final paper. Although there is no length requirement for this document, I’d expect that a successful proposal for this assignment would be somewhere around 3 pages, single-spaced. Your proposal should include the following sections: Introduction, Background, Literature Review, Research Plan, Timeline, and Conclusion. The assignment is due Fri. Sept. 26 at midnight. [Relates to Outcomes 3, 4].

NVivo Project File (150 points)—For this assignment, you will create and develop an NVivo file that relates to research you are doing for your final project. You will turn in the final version of this file at the end of semester when you turn in your final paper, but you will also have opportunities to share your file with instructor and classmates throughout the semester. You will also turn in a brief paper in which you explain the contents of the file and reflect on your use of NVivo for the semester’s research. The assignment is due Thursday, Dec. 11, at midnight (along with the paper you write for your final project). [Relates to Outcomes 3, 4].

Final Project (300 points)—The final project will be a research article on a subject related to the course. You should discuss this with me as early in the semester as possible, and you will turn in a formal proposal detailing your plans for the paper at mid-semester. The assignment is due Thursday, Dec. 11, at midnight. [Relates to Outcomes 1, 3, 4].

Presentation (100 points)—On the last day of class, each student will formally present the results of his/her final project. [Relates to Outcomes 2, 4].

Oral Participation (100 points)—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. If you are concerned about your participation grade, you may discuss it with me at any point in the semester. [Relates to Outcomes 1, 2].

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.

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/or 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.

COURSE CALENDAR

(Note: Reading assignments that are not included in the required texts will be available through the course Web site.)

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Daily Assignments</th>
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| Th 8-28 | **Health, Medicine, and Rhetoric: An Overview**  
“Some Definitions of Rhetoric,”  
Segal book, (Introduction + Ch. 1)  
Bazeley & Jackson book, Chapter 1 (“Perspectives: Qualitative Computing and NVivo”)  
**Blog response due Wed. Aug. 27, 10 pm** |
| Segal book, Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5 + Conclusion  
**Blog response due Wed. Sept. 10, 10 pm** |
| Th 9-11 | Segal book, Ch. 2, 3, 4, 5 + Conclusion  
**Blog response due Wed. Sept. 10, 10 pm** |
| Th 9-18 | **Roles of Medical Rhetoricians** (Part 1: Rhetorical Critics)  
Bazeley & Jackson book, Chapter 2 (“Starting Out, With a View Ahead”)  
**Blog response due Wed. Sept. 17, 10 pm** |
| Th 9-25 | Final Project proposal due this week (Fri. Sept. 26, midnight)—informally present proposals in class  
Read Bazeley & Jackson book, Chapter 3 (“Designing an NVivo Database”) and Chapter 8 (“Adding Reference Material to your NVivo Project”)  
**No blog response for this week** |
| Th 10-2 | **Roles of Medical Rhetoricians** (Part 2: Editors, Writers, Teachers)  
Bazeley & Jackson book, Chapter 4 (“Coding Basics”)  
**Blog response due Wed. Oct. 1, 10 pm** |
| Th 10-9 | **Roles of Medical Rhetoricians** (Part 3: Co-Investigators)  
Bazeley & Jackson book, Chapter 5 (“Going on with Coding”) |
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<tr>
<th>Th 10-16</th>
<th>Knowledge-Making in Medicine</th>
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Bazeley & Jackson book, Chapter 6 (“Cases, Classifications, and Comparisons”) |

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<th>Th 10-23</th>
<th>Medicine, Health, and Morality</th>
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Segal, J. What, in addition to drugs, do pharmaceutical ads sell? In J. Leach and D. Dysart-Gale, (Eds.), *Rhetorical questions of health and medicine* (pp. 9-32). Lanham, MD: Lexington Books. (I will provide pdf).  

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<th>Th 10-30</th>
<th>Rhetorics of Health, Wellness, and the Mind-Body Relationship</th>
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<tr>
<th>Th 11-6</th>
<th>Rhetorics, Brains, and Genders</th>
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| Ussher, Jane M. (2010). Are we medicalizing women’s misery? A critical review of women’s higher rates of reported depression. *Feminism and Psychology*, 20(9), 9-35.  

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<tr>
<th>Th 11-13</th>
<th>Health, Geography, and Rhetoric</th>
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World Health Report, “Emerging Environmental Challenges,”  
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<td>Th 11-20</td>
<td>Last class meeting—No assigned readings. Class time will be used for your presentations. We might need to schedule a longer class meeting than usual to make time for all of the presentations. During the week after Thanksgiving (Mon-Fri, Dec. 1-5), I will schedule individual conferences with each of you to discuss your progress on the final paper. <strong>No blog response this week</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 12-11</td>
<td>Final projects due at midnight (Wed. Dec. 3 is the last day of classes. Exams are Dec. 5-10. Final grades are due Mon. Dec. 15 @ noon)</td>
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