University of Maryland School of Public Health

(UMCP is located on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway People)

HLTH674 Health Literacy

Semester:	Fall 2023
Section:	
Classroom and Time:	Wed. 4-6:45 PM in SPH 2387F (Horowitz Center conference room)
Course webpage:	*https://umd.instructure.com/courses/1288200*
Instructor:	Dr. Cynthia Baur Office Hours: Wed 3-4 and by apt.
Office:	
Phone:	301-405-0388
Email:	cbaur@umd.edu

Course Description: The purpose of this course is to expose graduate public health and communication students to health literacy research and evaluation methods as an advanced research activity. We will consider health literacy methods that can be used at the individual, organization, community, and population levels. We will learn and apply health literacy methods to evaluate and design health information/content, including text, graphics, and numbers. We will examine and critique how these methods have been applied; identify methodological gaps and opportunities for adapted or new methods; and for some methods, we will apply them to in and out of class activities. Students will participate in methods applications and create several health materials, write short methods papers, and create and deliver presentations to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. The final exam will allow students to show how to use 2 or more health literacy methods to address a public health communication problem. The course will develop students' understanding of health literacy as an area of inquiry and application.

This course counts as an advanced methods course for BCH graduate students.

Course Pre- and Co-requisites:
Required: None
Recommended: Health communication, communication, journalism, literacy, or cognitive or information sciences classes

Course Learning Objectives:
Upon completing this course, the student will be able to:

Learning Outcomes	Mapped Assessments
1. Identify and critique health literacy methods at the individual, organization, and community levels	Assignments: Discussion posts, short papers and presentations on methods
2. Demonstrate skills in applying health literacy methods to information/content evaluation and design	Assignments: Discussion posts, health material creation
3. Apply 2 or more health literacy methods to a public health communication problem	Assignments: Final exam

Program Competencies Addressed in this Course:
The following Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) competencies are addressed in this course. The number in parentheses refers to the CEPH competency.

Program Competency	Mapped Assessments
1. Assess population needs, assets and capacities that affect communities' health (#7)	Short papers and presentations on methods
2. Select communication strategies for different audiences and sectors (#18)	Evaluating and creating health materials
3. Communicate audience-appropriate public health content, both in writing and through oral presentation (#19)	Evaluating and creating health materials
4. Apply systems thinking tools to a public health issue (#22)	Final exam

Skills Learned or Reinforced in this Course:
1. Analytical skills to identify and critique appropriate use of research methods
2. Methods skills to do health literacy related research or evaluation
3. Plain language writing skills
4. Health material design
5. Research design skills to integrate health literacy insights into research or evaluation on common public health problems and programs

Required Texts and Other Readings:
- *Other People's Words: The Cycle of Low Literacy*, Victoria Purcell-Gates, 1997
- Journal articles, reports, and web resources listed in Elms/Canvas

Required Technology and Other Materials:
- Laptop or tablet with wifi capability to do in and out of class work

Recommended Materials:
- Weekly *On the Media* show/podcast from WNYC, this show covers the media industry, journalism, and public information on a wide range of issues. It will help you understand the broader information environment when communicating about health topics.
- Reporting on health topics in your favorite media and also in new media you seek our during the semester.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools:
In this course, we will try artificial intelligence (AI)-powered programs such as ChatGPT or DALL-E to test methods of creating health materials. Given the rapid spread of AI tools for generating text, graphics,

and audio, you will likely think about or be asked by the organizations you work for to try these tools to revise or create health materials. It is important you understand how they work and when and how to use them, and we will critically consider these issues in course assignments and discussions.

When you use these tools in this class, it is your responsibility as a scholar to make sure you are clearly communicating the AI involvement in your work. Please make sure to use phrases such as "[your name] via DALL-E 2" (for images) or "This paper was generated with the help of GPT-3" (for essays). Please review the instructions in each assignment for more details on specifically how to show your work.

Course Communication:
All electronic communication will happen through Elms/Canvas. Please set up your notifications so that you receive emails and course notices through your preferred channel.

Course Requirements and Expectations:
I aim to create a learning community of scholars who are prepared to use health literacy knowledge and skills to address public health problems in many contexts, topics, and populations. Health literacy is a relatively new public health area, which gives you exciting possibilities to discover and contribute new research, projects, and activities.

Health literacy is likely a new topic for you, and I ask that you approach the course with a "growth mindset." This means you are open to learning, recognize that effort, practice, and accept feedback from me and your classmates as part of the process. You will also accept that first drafts aren't perfection, and you may have to revise several times before you complete an assignment.

If you have a growth mindset, you will learn foundational knowledge and skills in health literacy research methods so that you can critique research and evaluation study designs, data collection procedures, data analysis and reporting, and publications. You will also learn how to determine which health literacy methods will best inform your own research and evaluation projects. Studying health literacy methods will prepare you to be a more critical consumer of public health research and evaluation and be more a effective public health researcher or practitioner and differentiate you in the marketplace of ideas, jobs, and proposals/projects. Because you will be part of a select group of public health professionals with dedicated, sustained health literacy education/training (i.e. more than a few workshops or on-the-job learning), you will also be well-positioned to grow into leaders in the field.

The course is organized around different clusters of health literacy methods. I welcome students connecting their prior experiences to course topics.

Regular attendance, completing assignments and exams on time, and participating in both in and out-of-class activities will be critical to being successful in this course.

I will have regular exercises or activities to encourage participation. Participation is part of being a good classroom citizen. The type of participation I'm looking for stems from engagement with the course materials so that you have an informed opinion/position and includes
- coming to class with questions and comments that initiate robust discussions
- responding to questions I or other class participants pose
- contributing fully to activities and projects

Lack of participation and frequent missed classes will negatively affect your readiness to grapple with the course materials and complete assignments and exams.

We each come to this course with experiences and perspectives on health literacy, but we still have much to learn about what health literacy is, how it works, and how it affects health and well-being. The course should challenge all of us in expected and unexpected ways, both in terms of what you think you know about health literacy and the complexity and difficulty of the concepts and issues involved. We will work (very hard) and learn together, and I hope to end the class with new insights and readiness to advance health literacy for all.

Credit Hour Definition: For most courses, students can expect to spend 3 hours per week per credit hour during the regular semester. That three hours could be made up of lecture time, discussion time, lab team, and/or out-of-class time. For a 3-credit course that meets three hours a week for lecture/discussion, students should expect to have another 6 hours of out-of-class time per week (homework, reading, etc.). A 15-credit load would represent a 45-hour week.

Major Graded Assignments*:*
The course has 5 major graded assignments with participation points throughout the semester. The assignments are distributed and are in different formats, such as short written products, in-class presentations and activities, and online discussion posts. This approach allows you to develop and apply different communication skills and steadily build your understanding of the content and skills with the methods used in class.
1. 4 in-class presentations: Presentation #1, 5 points, Presentations 2-4, 10 points each, total 35 points
    a. Presentation #1, 5 points, Sept. 6
    b. Presentation #2, 10 points, Sept. 27
    c. Presentation #3, 10 points, Oct. 11
    d. Presentation #4, 10 points, Nov. 1
2. Health material: 10 points, Nov. 1
3. 1 brief paper: 10 points, Nov. 15
4. In-class activities, discussion posts, class participation: 15 points, throughout the semester
5. In-class debate: 10 points , Dec. 6
6. Final exam: 20 points, Dec. 19, 1:30-3:30 PM ET

Academic Integrity: The University of Maryland [defines academic dishonesty](#) as committing or facilitating cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, or self-plagiarism. Academic integrity is expected and students who do not uphold the UMD Code of Academic Integrity will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct.

Use of Course Assistance Websites and Online Group Forums: Course assistance websites, such as CourseHero and others, are not permitted resources for SPH courses, unless the professor explicitly gives permission for you to use one of these sites. Material pulled from these sites can be deemed unauthorized material and a violation of academic integrity. These sites offer information that might not be accurate and more generally stifle the learning process. In addition, it is understandable that students may use one of a variety of online or virtual forums for course-wide discussion (e.g., GroupME, WeChat, etc.). Collaboration in this way regarding concepts discussed in this course is permissible. However, collaboration on graded assignments is strictly prohibited. Examples include: asking classmates for answers on quizzes or exams, asking for access codes to clicker polls, etc. Additional information on academic integrity is found in **University Course Related Policies**, below.

University Course Related Policies:

All University of Maryland-approved graduate course policies are provided here:
https://gradschool.umd.edu/course-related-policies

Policy descriptions, resources, and links to official policy documents are provided for:

Academic Integrity: What is cheating? What is plagiarism? What is the Honor Pledge?
Code of Student Conduct: What behavior is prohibited?
Sexual Misconduct: What to do in case of sexual harassment or sexual assault.
Non-Discrimination: Procedures to prohibit discrimination, complaints about discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.
Accessibility: Information about disability support services (DSS) and accommodations.
Attendance, Absences, or Missed Assignments: The student must notify the instructor in a timely manner (typically first week of class). Read this prior to Schedule Adjustment date.
Course and Credit Changes and Withdrawals
Reasonable Expectations of Faculty in Conducting Academic Courses
Official UMD Communication: Use of email, communication with faculty, communication about cancelled class meetings, and weather-related or other urgent notifications.
Arbitrary and Capricious Grading Policy
Incomplete Grades
Good Standing and Academic Probation and Dismissal
Leave of Absence Policies
Graduate Student Rights and Responsibilities
Grievance Procedure
Other Resources: Ombuds Office, counseling, learning workshops, tutoring, writing help, questions about graduation, etc.

Course Procedures and Policies:
Inclement Weather / University Closings / Emergency Procedures:
In the event that the University has a delayed opening or is closed for an emergency or extended period of time, the instructor will communicate to students regarding schedule adjustments, including rescheduling of examinations and assignments due to inclement weather and campus emergencies.

Late work/missed assignments:
I will not accept late work unless you meet circumstances covered by the UMD Attendance, Absences, or Missed Assignments policy. Please email me as soon as you are sure you will have late work. Any late work I allow must be submitted within 1 week of the original deadline.

Classroom etiquette: We commit to a respectful tone in all written and oral communication related to the class. This includes addressing others; commenting; responding to comments; and asking for or responding to feedback.

Available Support Services:
You are expected to take personal responsibility for your own learning. This includes acknowledging when your performance does not match your goals and taking action. Everyone can benefit from some

expert guidance on time management, note taking, and exam preparation, so consider visiting http://ter.ps/learn and scheduling an appointment with an academic coach. Sharpen your communication skills (and improve your grade) by visiting https://gradschool.umd.edu/graduate-school-writing-center and schedule an appointment with the campus Writing Center. Here are helpful tips on writing professional emails: ter.ps/email. Finally, if you just need someone to talk to, visit http://www.counseling.umd.edu. Everyone needs help from time to time; all you have to do is ask for it.

Grading Procedures:
I grade assignments as the semester progresses and post grades in Elms. You can check Elms for your current grades.

Grading
99 - 100%	A+
94 – 98	A
90 – 93	A-
86 – 89	B+
83 – 85	B
80 – 82	B-
76 – 79	C+
73 – 75	C
70 – 72	C-
66 – 69	D+
63 – 65	D
60 – 62	D-
$\leq$ 59	F

Course Outline / Course Calendar:

Course Schedule Summary			
Session	Date	Topic	Assignments
# 1	8/30/22	What is the current health information environment? Where does health literacy fit? Health literacy definitions, models, and policy frameworks; a socio-ecological approach to health literacy methods; course overview and syllabus	Begin reading *Other People's Words* Take AI online course in Modules section
		Required Readings: Web resources: • Healthy People 2030 definitions • Health Literacy Issue Brief • Schillinger D, Social Determinants, Health Literacy and Disparities: Intersections and Controversies Recommended Readings: Reserves:	

		• Koh HK et al, Towards a Systems Approach to Health Literacy Research • Nutbeam, Health Literacy as a Public Health Goal • Sorenson et al, Health Literacy and Public Health: A Systematic Review and Integration of Definitions and Models	
# 2	9/6/22	Individual Part 1: Methods to understand and assess individuals' health literacy skills: consumers and patients (REALM, NVS, TOFHLA, "Chew questions")	
		Required Readings: Web resources: • Health Literacy Tool Shed • NPR story on Oliver James • PIAAC Highlights of U.S. National Results • Continue Other People's Words Recommended Readings: Reserves: • Nguyen, Passche-Orlow & McCormack, The State of Science of Health Literacy Measurement	In-class presentation on a tool from toolshed
# 3	9/13/22	Individual Part 2: Methods to understand and assess individuals' health literacy skills: recommended skills and teaching health literacy to healthcare providers, other professionals (Teach-back, Speaking & listening, Public health training)	Respond to prompt in Elms Discussion section
		Required Readings: Reserves: • Roter DL, Oral Literacy Demand • Rubin DL, Listenability as a Tool Web resources: • Always Use Teachback • Archie W podcast • CDC Effective Communication for Healthcare Teams	
# 4	9/20/22	Plain Language Methods	
		Required Readings: Web resources: • Federal Plain Language Guidelines • Doak, Doak, and Root, ch 3	Complete Other People's Words, test ChatGPT in class activity

# 5	9/27/22	Presentations on individual-level methods Organization Part 1: Methods to understand and assess organizational health literacy	First half of class period: In-class presentations on individual-level methods
		Required Readings: Reserves: • Brach C, Even in an emergency • Brach C, The journey to become a health literate organization Web resources: • HLE2 toolkit	
# 6	10/4/22	Organizational Health Literacy: oral health literacy example	
		Required Readings: Reserves: • Horowitz AM et al, Perspectives of Maryland adults • Horowitz AM et al, What Maryland adults with young children Web resources: • Oral health literacy toolkit Additional background readings on reserve: Health literacy environmental scans; Perceptions of dental hygienists; Science, politics and communication	Guest lecture: Dr. Alice Horowitz Respond to prompt in Elms Discussion section
# 7	10/11/22	Presentations on organizational-level methods Health materials Part 1: Methods to assess health materials (SMOG, SAM, CDC Index)	First half of class period: In-class presentations on organizational - level methods
		Readings: Reserves: • Baur C, Prue C, The CDC Clear Communication is a New Evidence-based Tool to Prepare and Review Health Information Web Resources: • Doak, Doak and Root, ch 4 • CDC Clear Communication Index website	
# 8	10/18/22	Health materials Part 2: CLAS standards, translation, visuals	

		Required Readings: Reserves: • Franconeri, S. L., et al, The Science of Visual • Data Communication: What Works • Woloshin, Yang, and Fischhoff, Communicating Health Information with Visual Displays Web resources: • Doak, Doak and Root, ch 7 • National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services (CLAS) Additional resources: Visual design hacks for the non-deisgner	Respond to prompt in Elms Discussion section In-class activity: test AI image generator
# 9	10/25/22	Health materials Part 3: Measuring and applying numeracy and risk	
		Required Readings: Reserves: • Slovic, Risk Perception and Risk Analysis Web resources: • Benda et al, Lower objectively and subjectively assessed numeracy… • Housten et al, Limitations of the S-TOFHLA in measuring poor numeracy	Respond to prompt in Elms Discussion section In-class activity
#10	11/1/22	Health materials Part 4: Presentations on health materials Community 1: Methods to understand and assess community health literacy	First half of class period: In-class presentations on health materials methods + health material
		Required Readings: Reserves: • Batterham et al, Health literacy: applying current concepts… • Muscat DM, et al, Embedding health literacy research and practice… Web resources: None Additional resources:	

		• CDC Community Health Assessment and Health Improvement Planning • CDC 10 Essential Public Health Services • Healthy People Social Determinants of Health	
# 11	11/8/22	Community Part 2: Designing a community health literacy assessment	
		Required Readings: Reserves: • Osborne RH et al, The grounded psychometric development… • Platter et al, 2021, The value of community health literacy assessments Web resources: • Platter et al, 2019, Community health literacy assessment	Respond to prompt in Elms Discussion section In-class activity
# 12	11/15/22	Digital Part 1: Methods to understand and assess digital literacy	Brief paper on community methods due at beginning of class
		Required Readings: Web resources: • Health Literacy Online • User experience basics • User research basics	Guest lecture: Sandy Hilfiker
# 13	11/22/22	No class- Thanksgiving break	
# 14	11/29/22	Digital Part 2: Methods to use digital tools for health purposes	
		Required Readings: Web resources: • Cheng, C et al, Applying the Electronic Health Literacy Lens: Systematic Review of Electronic Health Interventions Targeted at Socially Disadvantaged Groups • Jackson DN, Sehgal N, Baur C, Benefits of mHealth Co-design for African American and Hispanic Adults: Multi-Method Participatory Research for a Health Information App	Respond to prompt in Elms Discussion section

		• Sehgal NJ, et al, The Benefits of Crowdsourcing to Seed and Align an Algorithm in an mHealth Intervention for African American and Hispanic Adults: Survey Study	
# 15	12/6/22	Infodemics, misinformation, information quality, AI: is health literacy achievable? Students will divide in 2 teams and prepare in class to debate health literacy in the current information environment.	In-class debate
		Required Readings: Web resources: World Health Organization Infodemic website Students will add their own readings and resources for the debate	
FE	12/19/22	Final Exam, 1:30-3:30 (students get final exam assignment on last day of class, Dec. 6)	Exam + in-class presentation

Health Literacy and Plain Language Tools and Resources
- CDC Clear Communication Index: www.cdc.gov/ccindex
- CDC *Everyday Words for Public Health Communication*: https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/everydaywords/
- CMS *Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective*: https://www.cms.gov/Outreach-and-Education/Outreach/WrittenMaterialsToolkit
- Federal Plain Language Guidelines: www.plainlanguage.gov
- *Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills*: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy/resources/teaching-patients-with-low-literacy-skills/
- United HealthGroup *Just Plain Clear* glossary: https://www.justplainclear.com/en

Additional Literature, Websites and Other Resources:
- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) Health Literacy Center: https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/clinicians-providers/resources/health-literacy.html
- CDC health literacy website: www.cdc.gov/healthliteracy
- Health Information National Trends Survey (HINTS): https://hints.cancer.gov/
- *Health literacy interventions and outcomes: an updated systematic review* www.ahrq.gov/downloads/pub/evidence/pdf/literacy/literacyup.pdf
- Health Literacy Out Loud podcasts: https://healthliteracy.com/health-literacy-out-loud-hlol-podcasts/
- IOM *Health Literacy: Prescription to End Confusion* www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2004/Health-Literacy-A-Prescription-to-End-Confusion.aspx

- Medline/PubMed Health Literacy Search: www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-office-director/office-communications-public-liaison/clear-communication/health-literacy
- National Health Education Standards www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm
- Roundtable on Health Literacy, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine: http://nationalacademies.org/hmd/Activities/PublicHealth/HealthLiteracy.aspx

Basic Needs Security: If you have difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or lack a safe and stable place to live and believe this may affect your performance in this course, please visit http://go.umd.edu/basic-needs for information about resources the campus offers you and let me know if I can help in any way.

Student Name Change in ELMS-Canvas: https://go.umd.edu/change_name_in_ELMS_Canvas

Campus Building Amenities: https://maps.umd.edu/map/ (follow the prompts below and amenities will populate on the interactive campus map)
All Gender Restrooms: Click: Layers, Building Amenities; Select All Gender or Gender Inclusive Restrooms
Family Restrooms: Click: Layers, Building Amenities; Select All Gender or Gender Inclusive Restrooms
Lactation/Feeding Room Locations: Click: Layers, Building Amenities; Select Lactation/Feeding Rooms