American University of Beirut Faculty of Health Sciences

Department of Health Promotion and Community Health

HPCH 207 (2 credits)
Risk Communication in Public Health Practice
Spring 2023

Instructors
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Class Time: Wednesday, 10-11:40am
Location: VD Room 332

Course Description:
In this course students will learn the basic concepts of risk communication and its applications in public health. This course will cover the basic principles of theories of risk perception (e.g.,Prospect Theory) and discuss their applications in public health incidents responses. We will include elements of risk message framing, public engagement, using traditional and social media, as well as ethical considerations of public communication. At the end of this course, students will be able to apply these concepts to design messages to convey risk information in public health by producing messages in various formats, including fact sheets, press releases, video scripts, text messages, and media kits. The final presentation will consist of a mock press conference on a pre-determined topic. Prerequisites: HPCH 210 and HPCH 212

Competencies and Learning Objectives:

The course objectives and learning activities are aligned with some of the foundational competencies andcross-cutting experiences required for a Public Health Bachelor's degree, according to the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH).

CEPH competencies:
1) Foundational competencies*:* ability to communicate public health information, in both oral and written forms, through a variety of media and to diverse audiences; b) the ability to locate, use, evaluate and synthesize public health information.

2) Cross-cutting experiences**:** community dynamics, critical thinking and creativity, independent workand a personal work ethic, networking, professionalism, teamwork and leadership.

Course Learning Objectives (LOs)

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

LO2.2 Use (risk) communication theory (and models) to analyze individual, group, and mass media messages

LO3.4 Utilize empirical evidence, formative research, and theory in the development of risk communication strategies and messages

LO4.2 Employ theoretical, methodological, and practical knowledge to build partnerships with the media for addressing health issues

LO5.2 Use effective oral and written communication relevant to specific audiences

LO5.3 Apply analytical skills in interpreting and delivering health information in mass media

LO6.3 Create risk communication strategies and messages using various channels and forms of media

LO7.3 Apply ethical decision making in communicating public health messages

LOSL **(Service Learning).** Apply effective interpersonal communication and group interaction skills (listening, openness to others' ideas, preparation, contribution, leadership)

Description of the Service Learning activities

➢ This course has partnered with organizations that serve disadvantaged or vulnerable populations in Beirut.

➢ A list of the organizations with the specific assignment and contact information will be provided to the students during the third week of the semester. Students will form groups of 3 or 4 and each group will select one organization to be placed in. Working together with the organization, students will gain better understanding of the processes and tools learned in class and their implications on quality and cost.

➢ Time commitment: Students will spend approximately 10 hours of the total class hours at the organization between the period of February 7th till April 24th. The final schedule of visits will be agreed upon between the students, the course instructor and the organization.

➢ *The output of the task will be graded for structure and quality of content*. The format of the output will be determined in agreement with the organization and the instructor. *The output has to be approved for content by the organization and in communication with the instructor before submission for grading.*

➢ *All administrative/logistics issues or concerns related to SL should be coordinated with Ms. Reem Abou Harb from the Center for Public Health Practice. Students will meet Ms. Abou Harb early during the course and will be informed about her exact role in assisting with logistics.*

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Assessment of student learning:

Below is a general overview of the assignments used to assess the progress of student learning. Guidelines and specific information about the assignments will be provided on Moodle <u>two weeks to one month before the due date</u>. The summary of the assessments and their weights towards the final grade is provided in **Table 1** below.

> *Active participation in class – 5%*

Students will be evaluated on the quality of their contributions to general class discussions and small group discussions. Please check the grading rubric in this syllabus.

> *Moodle Forum – 10%*

Students will individually select the week during which she/he will post a media piece (poster, leaflet, news clip, blog, video) that is addressing risk communication on a specific public health issue. They will post 3 questions to open discussion about various concepts in risk communication. Students not posting that week, will need to interact with the posted questions.

*A-Reflections 20% (10% each)*As part of the service-learning course evaluation, students will write two guided reflections (one at the beginning, one at the end of the semester) on their experience with the service-learning partner organization and project. The first reflection should delve into their first impression and speculate on the expected outcomes of the experience. The second reflection should discuss the experience under the light of the risk communication project, elaborating on implications for public health practice lessons learned. The second reflection is expected to clearly demonstrate an improvement from the previous reflection. Discussion on reflective writing, examples and further guidelines will be shared with the students in class and on Moodle.

> *Assignment 1: Risk communication strategy (Individual 15% and group 25%) - 40%*

Students will work individually and in groups to develop a risk communication strategy on a selected topic where they willanalyze the risk and audience characteristics including risk perception and develop audience specific communication strategies. The detailed guideline will be shared on Moodle.:

This service learning experience will span the entire course and follow this sequence. The final product will consist of a report that represents the RCCE strategy on the chosen topic shared with the organization. Throughout the course, students will share their work in parts in class and receive feedback from peers and course instructors before proceeding with the next part of this assignment.

Part 1.1 Situational Analysis: NGOs will identify the public health issues (GBV, Infectious Diseases natural disasters, etc.) Students then choose the topic of their interest and form groups. Individually, students will conduct a desk review of the chosen topic, exploring the epidemiological and behavioral data.

Part 1.2 (Group Work) Tool designing and rapid data collection: Students will collaborate to design/refine an existing tool aimed at addressing the identified public health issue. This tool will be intended for conducting community data collection. Importantly, this tool instrument must undergo validation and testing facilitated by the NGO.

Part 1.3: Audience Segmentation (Group Work): Building on both the situational analysis and the rapid data collection analysis, students will perform audience segmentation and create audience profiles.

Part 1.4: Intervention planning (Group Work): Students will work together to design a comprehensive

intervention strategy (based on a template). This will involve defining clear objectives, providing rationale, specifying the intervention's scope, identifying the target audience, establishing a budget, creating a timeline, logic model of M&E(including community listening) and addressing any relevant assumptions or considerations. Students will propose a community listening strategy, outlining how they intend to engage with and collect input from the community effectively.

Assignment 2: Press conference (individual 5% - group 20%)

As a culminating activity, students will organize and conduct a simulation of a press conference. This event will be attended by NGO staff and may potentially include beneficiaries and potential donors (as media representatives). Additionally, students will prepare a press release and a fact sheet of the RCCE strategy they have developed in addition to the outlines that will go within the press kit to accompany the press conference (template will be provided for more details).

Students will work in groups and each student will be responsible of preparing one key point and of answering to potential questions around this point that the spokesperson (a member of the group selected by her/his peers) can use during the press conference. This part will be submitted individually. The group will also develop a press kit including a press release which will be evaluated for the group grade. Detailed guidelines and various materials on preparing press conferences and press kits will be posted on Moodle and discussed in class

Table 1. Summary of the Course Assessments and their Weight

Assessment	Due Date	Grade: Individual	Grade: Group	Learning Objectives (LOs)
Participation and contribution to class and to Moodle discussion forums (individual)	One assigned week per student	15		All
Reflections First Second		10 10		LOSL

Assignment 1: Risk Communication Strategy
    Report
    Peer evaluation
    Site evaluation
	March 10	10
		5
			20
			
			5
				LO 2.2 LO3.4 LO 5.2
				LO 6.3 LO7.3 LOSL

Assignment 2: Press Conference	TBD (during reading period)	5	20	LO 4.2 LO 5.2 LO5.3 LO 7.3 LOSL
Total		55	45	

Course Format:

- All sessions will be given in-person unless circumstances do not allow it. The instructor

willcommunicate any urgent changes in due time.

- All materials will be posted on Moodle which is the main resource page that you need to use for allinformation and materials related to the course.
- For course related announcements, the instructor will communicate through Moodle forum posts which students will also receive via email. Students can communicate back with the instructor through email.

Course Ethics and Etiquette:

1. **Active participation.** The quality and amount of learning in this course will largely depend on the active participation during class where students will be working in smaller groups. Students are expected to have prepared the readings before class sessions and according to the schedule in this syllabus. Students are responsible for being aware of related announcements, which are shared on Moodle. Further details about participation including guidelines and rubrics will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle.
2. **We are here to learn.** Discussion is fundamental to open minds. Learning means that sometimes we might be right and some other times we might be wrong. Keep an open mind; be respectful of others' opinions and ideas.
3. **Punctuality.** It is important to come to class on time in order to avoid disruptions and missing important information. Punctuality means also meeting deadlines. Late assignments will not be tolerated. Please discuss any specific circumstance with the instructor.
4. **Writing:** Written communication is essential for communication, health education and behavioral science. Proofread your written assignments for typos and spelling and grammatical errors and correct these. Students who do not do so will see this reflected in their grades. Contact ***AUB Writing Center and book an appointment online*** to share a draft or consult on writing skills in order to improve the quality of your writing.
5. **Academic Integrity.** Education is demanding and time management is essential. Students should nothesitate to use available resources without cutting corners. This university does not tolerate any formof cheating or plagiarism. Students must review the Student Code of Conduct in the handbook provided by AUB (p. 44) to be familiar with definitions and penalties. When in doubt, students should contact instructors to avoid future complications. Penalties include failing marks on the assignments,suspension or expulsion from university, and a permanent mention in the student's records.
6. **Accessible Education Office (AEO):** The Accessible Education Office (AEO) coordinates academic accommodations and services for all eligible AUB students with disabilities (such as ADHD, learning difficulties, mental health conditions, chronic or temporary medical conditions, and others). If you have a disability for which you wish to request accommodations at the department, faculty or university level, please contact AEO as soon as possible. Once you register with our office, we will assist you in receiving appropriate accommodations and will liaise with your instructors and any related entity to best support your needs. AEO is located in West Hall room 314, and can be reached by phone at 1-350000 ext. 3246 or by email: accessibility@aub.edu.lb. Information about our services can be found at: https://www.aub.edu.lb/SAO/Pages/Accessible-Education.aspx

7. AUB is committed to facilitating a campus free of all forms of discrimination including sex/gender-based harassment prohibited by **Title IX**. The University's non-discrimination policy applies to, and protects, all students, faculty, and staff. If you think you have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual misconduct, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. If you speak

to a faculty or staff member about an issue such as harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, the information will be kept as private as possible, however, faculty and designated staff are required to bring it to the attention of the University's Equity/Title IX Coordinator. Faculty can refer you to fully confidential resources, and you can find information and contacts at www.aub.edu.lb/titleix. **Toreport an incident**, contact the University's Equity/Title IX Coordinator Ms. Mitra Tauk at 01-350000 ext. 2514, or titleix@aub.edu.lb. An anonymous report may be submitted online via EthicsPoint at www.aub.ethicspoint.com.

8. The service learning component will require that you work off campus with partner institutions and community settings; please maintain at all times a high degree of professionalism (punctuality, formal communication through emails and meetings, respecting all opinions, etc), confidentiality in relation to the internal affairs of the hosting organization, respect for others and time, and a proper dress code.

Course Readings:

Textbook
Lundgren, R. E., & McMakin, A. H. (2013). *Risk communication: A handbook for communicating environmental, safety, and health risks* (5th ed.). Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons.
(The e-book version is available through AUB library e-resources).

Additional Readings and Resources:
Additional readings and materials will supplement the course textbook and will be included in course sessions, as noted in the schedule below.

Readings:
- Ochega A. Ataguba & John E. Ataguba (2020) Social determinants of health: the role of effective communication in the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries, Global Health Action, 13:1, 1788263, DOI: 10.1080/16549716.2020.1788263
- Clark-Ginsberg A, Petrun Sayers E. (2020) Communication missteps during COVID-19 hurt those already most at risk. J Contingencies and Crisis Management, 28:482–484.
- McComas K (2006) Defining Moments in Risk Communication Research: 1996–2005, Journal of Health Communication, 11:1, 75-91, DOI: 10.1080/10810730500461091
- Palenchar MJ, Heath R (2007) Strategic risk communication: Adding value to society, Public Relations Review, 33(2): 120-129.

Manuals and guidance documents:
- COVID-19 Vaccine Perceptions in Africa Social and Behavioral Science Data https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/16580
- How Can Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) include marginalized and vulnerable people in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. Available at: https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/risk-comm-and-community-engagement-in-the-emed-region
- Key considerations for successful risk communication and community engagement programs during COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies
  Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/346995005_Key_Considerations_for_Successful_Risk_Communication_and_Community_Engagement_RCCE_Programmes_During_COVID-19_Pandemic_and_Other_Public_Health_Emergencies
- How to Establish and Manage a Systematic Community Feedback Mechanism. https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/IFRC_feedback-mechanism-with-communities_ok_web.pdf
- WHO Policy Brief: Building trust through RCCE: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Policy_Brief-RCCE-2022.1
- Risk Communication and Community Engagement in Action During Ukraine's War: https://www.annalsofglobalhealth.org/articles/10.5334/aogh.3937/
- World Health Organization. Regional Office for South-East Asia. (2019). Risk Communication Strategy for Public Health Emergencies in the WHO South-East Asia Region: 2019–2023. https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/326853
- Risk communication and community engagement: a compendium of case studies in times of COVID-19https://www.who.int/europe/publications/i/item/WHO-EURO-2022-6186-45951-66353

- World Health Organization. RCCE Action plan guidance COVID-19 preparedness and response.Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/risk-communication-and-community- engagement-(rcce)-action-plan-guidance
- WHO Outbreak communication guidelines. 2020. Available at:https://www.who.int/emergencies/risk-communications/publications
- Gamhewage G. An introduction to risk communication. WHO. 2014. Available at: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/an-introduction-to-risk-communication

Weblinks:

- https://www.who.int/emergencies/risk-communications
- https://emergency.cdc.gov/cerc/index.asp
- https://www.who.int/emergencies/risk-communications/publications
- https://www.who.int/about/communications/credible-and-trustedhttps://www.who.int/about/communications/credible-and-trusted
- https://www.psandman.com/articles/covello.htm
- https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/participation/promoting-interest/press-conference/main
- https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication

Class Schedule and Readings:

Sessions	Topics Covered and Activities	Readings	LOs	Service learning activities
Jan 24	*Introduction to the course* *Introduction to Risk Communication*	McComas 2006		
Jan 31	*Approaches to communicate risk* *App: Intro to social and behavioral needs assessment*	Chapter 2 Palenchar 2007 COVID-19 Vaccine Perceptions in Africa Social and Behavioral Science Data	2.2 3.4 5.3	
Feb 7	*Projects* *Reflective writing exercise*			Select projects
Feb 14	*Principles and Barriers to effective risk communication* *App: Audience profile and messages*	Chapter 6 Clark-Ginsberg 2020 How can risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) include marginalized and vulnerable people in the Eastern Mediterranean region	2.2 5.2 6.3 7.3	
Feb 21	*SL visit*		2.2 6.3 7.3	Schedule first visit to the site Obj: understanding the nature of the project the audience profile, data collection methods used by the site
Feb 28	*Community Engagement* *App: Community Engagement (Guest Speaker)*	Chapters 7, 8 WHO Policy Brief: Building trust through RCCE How to Establish and	2.2 3.4 7.3	

		Manage a Systematic Community Feedback Mechanism		
March 6	*SL visit*	Chapters 7,8 Communications and community Engagement in Action During Ukrainian War Risk Communication Strategy for Public Health Emergencies in the WHO South-East Asia Region: 2019–2023	3.4 6.3	Second Visit: Conduct data collection to validate the data collection tool
Mar 13	*Methods of risk communication* -Information materials, visual representations, face-to-face communication (spokesperson), news media -Media & technologies for risk communication Application: writing a press release	Chapter 10-14	4.2 5.2 5.3 6.3	
Mar 20	*Coordination in emergencies*	Chapters 15, 17 Risk communication and community engagement: a compendium of case studies in times of COVID-19	4.2 5.3	
Mar 27	SL visit			Third visit: Share draft plan with site for feedback
April 3	Finalizing strategies/group work in class			
April 17	Presentation of strategies to sites in class			
April 24	**Press conference**			Last visit to the site