Seminar in Interpersonal Communication: Interaction in Health Contexts

Professor: Allison Scott (allison.scott@uky.edu, 231 Grehan Building)

Course Description: 223 Grehan Building, Tuesday: 6:00-8:30p
This course examines diverse theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding the role of communication in managing mental and physical health. We will focus on four general areas related to interaction in health contexts: (a) communicating identity in health and illness, (b) health and personal relationships, (c) health care provider/patient interaction, (d) and medical decision making.

Learning Outcomes: This course is designed to help you develop various scholarly abilities: to extract key findings from scholarly articles, evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of a study or theory, and design and execute a research project.

Readings: Course readings will be available in electronic format. The readings represent a mix of some classics, some new things, some studies selected for their innovation or excellence, and some studies selected for the way they illustrate an approach or problem. I expect that you will read all the readings assigned each week and that you will read at the level expected for a graduate student (i.e., carefully, critically, curiously). I hope you will come to class with questions about things that don’t make sense. I realize that students in the course will have varying levels of experience with various kinds of research methods that are used in the studies we will read – do the best you can with what you know and let me know how I can help to clarify or explain what you don’t understand.

Basis for grade: Your grade in the course will be based on your consistent engagement with readings and with the other members of the class (50%), a midterm examination (10%) and on a final project (40%).

The engagement portion of your grade has two components. First, I look forward to your constructive participation in class sessions. I will usually have some brief opening and closing comments, and I will lecture occasionally, but I expect that most of our time will be spent in facilitated discussion of assigned readings and related issues. Second, before 10 of our 13 available class periods, I ask that you complete a brief reaction paper in response to the full set of readings assigned for that period. These should be no more than two pages of single spaced text (containing correct spelling and grammar), emailed as an attachment to me by 5:00p Monday evening. Reaction papers help you to crystallize your thoughts prior to sharing them in discussion; they also help me to gauge where our collective interests, questions, concerns, and insights may lie so that I can more effectively facilitate our time together. Outstanding reaction papers will summarize and synthesize, analyze and evaluate the readings, as well as raise questions for us to consider as a group.
The **midterm examination** will consist of an essay response to a question based on the film *Wit*. I strongly encourage you to draw on the readings from this course in answering the midterm question. The criteria on which I will evaluate your midterm include conceptualization (mastery of ideas), analysis (interpretation and application of concepts), and argument (strength of logic in both content and style). Please use APA format. A reasonable length for this paper is 5-7 pages.

The **final project** can be any one of a variety of things, including a book review that you submit to a journal, a grant proposal, or a team research project in which you collect data. Once you choose (as a class) which option you would prefer to pursue, additional information will be forthcoming.

**Schedule:**

**September 2: Introduction**

**COMMUNICATION AND IDENTITY**

**September 9: The sick role and other theories of illness identity**

**September 16: Illness narratives and biography**
September 23: Stigma and other identity threats

HEALTH AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

September 30: Disclosing illness to others

October 7: Managing uncertainty in illness


**October 14: Puzzles of social support**


**HEALTH CARE PROVIDER/PATIENT INTERACTION**

**October 21: The impact of others on health care interactions**


**October 28:** We will watch *Wit* in class to prepare for the mid-term examination, which is due November 4th.

**November 4: Interpreter-mediated interactions**

**November 11: Patient self-advocacy and treatment (non)adherence**

**MEDICAL DECISION MAKING**

**November 18: Models of decision making**

**December 2: Risk information and genetic testing**

**December 9: End-of-life decision making**