

## SEMINAR IN HEALTH COMMUNICATION: MESSAGE DESIGN

CJT 771-001 Course Syllabus, Spring 2011  
Monday 3:30-6:00 PM, 223 Grehan Building

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**“I’m against picketing, but I don’t know how to show it.” Mitch Hedberg**

**“I waited and waited, and when no message came, I knew it must have been from you.” Ashleigh Brilliant**

### INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

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You’ve heard, “It’s not what you say, it’s how you say it.” Well, actually, it’s both. While in the daily world of “on the fly” interpersonal communication, we have only so much ability to craft what we say and how we say it, when we craft persuasive messages for interventions and campaigns, we have much, much, much more control. This seminar will consider approaches to constructing persuasive messages through an intensive examination of the literature investigating the structure, format, content, and function/effect of messages.

### GENERAL COURSE OBJECTIVES

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1. *Students will become familiar with the conceptual and operational definitions of message “elements” (structure, format, content).*
2. *Students will become familiar with the outcome variables of interest (function/effect) in message design research.*
3. *Students will be aware of other communication elements (source, channel, receiver) operative in message design research and how they are considered in research design.*
4. *Students will be introduced to the theoretical and methodological approaches used to study message design and effects.*
5. *Students will investigate a specific area of message design research and propose a theoretically sound, methodologically viable, and intellectually stimulating empirical study to advance knowledge in the area.*
6. *Students will be provided practice in making a professional research presentation.*
7. *Students will become familiar with the major issues in message design research and develop a good sense of how various approaches either advance or impede scholarly work in this area.*

## REQUIRED BOOKS

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American Psychological Association. (2010). *Publication manual of the American Psychological Association* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Author.  
Other readings as assigned (see below, pp. 5-8).

## RECOMMENDED REFERENCE BOOKS

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### Communication

Berger, C.R., Roloff, M.E., & Ewoldsen, D. R. (Eds.). (2010). *The handbook of communication science* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE  
Knapp, M. L., & Daly, J. A. (2004). *A guide to publishing in scholarly communication journals* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Austin, TX: International Communication Association.  
Schramm, W. (1997). *The beginnings of communication study in America: A personal memoir*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

### Writing

Gopen, G. D. (2004). *The sense of structure: Writing from the reader's perspective*. New York: Pearson Longman.  
Kolln, M. J. (2007). *Rhetorical grammar: Grammatical choices, rhetorical effects* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: Pearson Education.

### Methods/Statistics

Field, A. (2009). *Discovering statistics using SPSS* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

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This course operates as a graduate seminar. This means that students are expected to come to class having read and thought about assigned readings and that everyone will participate in an active and informed manner in class discussions. In designing this course, I have reviewed the communication and related literatures to identify empirical research that investigates some aspect of this thing we call a “message,” and I have organized the results of the search into topical categories ranging from the micro to the macro of message structure, format, and content. Where possible, I have tried to balance review pieces, meta-analyses, and original empirical research, all while keeping the amount of reading each week at a manageable level. My goal is to provide a comprehensive treatment of what a message is and does, while considering why it does what it does, and to whom and how. Tall order? Yep. That’s why I’m counting on you to jump right in and work with me to make this course engaging, challenging, stimulating, and, if we’re lucky, fun! At the end of this seminar, you should be able to recognize a message in a dark alley and know how to deal with it. 😊

## PERSONAL NOTE

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I am looking forward to having you in class and getting to know you as we work through our semester together. One of my goals is for you to leave this seminar with a broad background in message design issues (from the micro to the macro), along with an appreciation that the material covered in this class is just the “tip of the iceberg.” Another of my goals is for you to leave this seminar with an appreciation of the multiple aspects of scholarship—not “merely” an understanding of course content, but an appreciation of the importance of creative and theory-based hypothesis generation; careful and appropriate methodology and statistics; and, yes, sophisticated and pristine writing skills. To achieve these goals, I am committed to quality teaching. I will strive to make class time well organized, fully interactive, relevant, and intellectually stimulating. But I need you to commit to the course, as well! Come to class having read and thought about the week’s readings. A seminar like this works only if the instructor and students are fully committed to it. This can be a great experience. Please help me make it so! Along the way, if there is something that I can do to make this course more relevant to you, your work, or your research interests, let me know. Take advantage of my office hours and e-mail. I have an open door policy and I’m willing to help. Just ask!

## COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

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### Written Assignments

*Critical Summaries and Discussion Questions:* Students who are acting as discussion leaders (see below) will write “critical summaries” of one of the readings assigned that particular week [students must do different readings, so please coordinate with your discussion partner(s)]. Students who are not acting as discussion leaders will prepare a list of at least one discussion question per reading (this includes the first week, when we have no assigned discussion leaders). See “Critical Summaries and Discussion Questions” handout for detailed instructions.

*Research Proposal:* You will identify a message element that interests you (e.g., vividness, guilt). You will review in detail the research investigating this element, analyze its theoretical foundations, summarize/synthesize/criticize results, identify weaknesses/gaps/contradictions, and propose a research study to advance the knowledge in the particular area. See “Research Proposal” handout for detailed instructions. Due Friday, April 22, 4:30 pm.

### In-Class Presentations/Participation

*Message Examples:* Weeks 2-6 and 9-12, you will bring to class one example of one of the particular message elements under discussion. These messages may be on any topic (e.g., exercise, diabetes, tires, blue jeans) and may be print or video (no longer than 30 seconds, please). We will review these messages at the beginning of each class and draw on them as examples during our discussion. Finding messages like this may seem a daunting task at first blush, but it really isn't: Messages are everywhere! Just keep your eyes open! Awareness is everything! (I really like exclamation points!!!! ☺)

*Discussion Leaders:* While all students are required to read and be prepared to discuss all of the reading assignments each week, students will be assigned four weeks for which they will act as “discussion leader.” Any given week of readings will be assigned to at least two students so discussion is promoted and nobody is overwhelmed. The discussion should address the major issues/points made in the readings, should be responsive to questions asked by fellow students, and should attempt to synthesize ideas across readings (within and between topics, as applicable).

*Research Proposal Presentation:* You will make a formal, professional presentation of your research proposal in class. See “Research Proposal Presentation” handout for detailed instructions.

## COURSE EVALUATION

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Written Assignments:	Critical Summaries (4 @ 50 each)	200
	Discussion Questions (8 @ 10 each)	80
	Research Proposal	250
In-Class Presentations:	Discussion Presentations (4 @ 60 each)	240
	Question Asking and Participation in Discussion (8 @ 15 each)	120
	Message Examples (9 @ 5 each)	45
	<u>Research Proposal Presentation</u>	<u>100</u>
Total Points		1035*

With this point distribution, 53% of your grade is based on written work and 47% is based on presentations and participation.

Final grades will be determined using the standard 90-100% = A, 80-89% = B, 70-79% = C, <70%=E.

\*Not a nice, round number. ☹

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS

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*Attendance.* I expect that you will attend class and be on time for each session. If you have a problem that prevents you from doing so, you should contact me before class begins. If you miss two or more classes, I will encourage you to withdraw from the course.

*Writing Skills.* I expect that you will demonstrate excellent writing skills. You should be able to compose grammatically correct sentences, write well-developed paragraphs, and express your ideas in a well-organized, coherent manner. (You also should be able to follow APA style.) If you have trouble with spelling, grammar, or punctuation, I will point it out to you. I will do so in the most face-saving way possible, but it is my responsibility as your instructor to point out mistakes, so if you make 'em, I shall work with you to correct 'em. This way, you won't go through life mixing up "stationary" and "stationery."

*Oral Skills.* I also expect that you will demonstrate excellent oral communication skills. You will be facilitating discussion of required course materials and making a formal presentation. During discussions, you should be able to extemporaneously present your observations and arguments in a clear and concise manner. Your objective will be not only to help your fellow class members understand the material, but to show the relevance of your observations and arguments. I expect that formal presentations will be polished and, if appropriate, include polished handouts. Problems with spelling and punctuation are difficult to discern in an oral presentation, but if you tend to make grammatical or pronunciation errors, I will point those out to you, as well. That way, you won't go through life sounding silly if you pronounce "segue" like it's a hedge or you add "ir" to "regardless."

*Analytical Skills.* I expect that you have some background in empirical research methods that will allow you to analyze the literature you will be reading. If your background is minimal, see me for some suggested readings.

*Completion of Assignments.* I expect that you will turn your assignments in on time. All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date or by the designated time if the due date does not correspond with a regular class meeting. You should proofread all assignments carefully before turning them in. Work that is challenged at the level of grammar, spelling, or punctuation will be penalized up to 10 percentage points. Work that does not meet APA standards also will be penalized up to 10 percentage points. Late work will be reduced by 10 percentage points for each day it is late. Poor planning on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part or a good reason for turning work in late. Also, please note that you are expected to complete reading assignments before due dates!

*Academic Integrity.* I expect that you will do your own work. Any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism as defined in the Students Rights and Responsibilities Code (<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/Code/part2.html>; especially see sections 6.3.1 on plagiarism and 6.3.2 on cheating) will be sanctioned with an E grade for the course. Although University of Kentucky policy stipulates the minimum penalty for an academic offense is a zero on the assignment, I have discretion as the instructor to impose a harsher penalty if I elect to—and in a graduate course, I elect to.

*Reasonable Accommodation Policy.* If you have a special need that requires accommodation or assistance, let me know as soon as possible but no later than Monday, January 31. You need to provide documentation. Then we will work to make reasonable accommodation so we can ensure you have the opportunity to fully demonstrate your abilities and benefit from this course.

**January 24**                    Introduction(s), Background, Overview, Assignments

- Hosman, L. A. (2002). Language and persuasion. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 371-390). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2003). Message properties, mediating states, and manipulation checks: Claims, evidence, and data analysis in experimental persuasive message effects research. *Communication Theory*, 13(3), 251-274.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2004). Trends and prospects in persuasion theory and research. In J. S. Seiter & R. H. Gass (Eds.), *Perspectives on persuasion, social influence, and compliance gaining* (pp. 31-43). Boston, MA: Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

**January 31**                    Arguments and Evidence (message example due)

- Areni, C. S. (2002). The proposition-probability model of argument structure and message acceptance. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29(2), 168-187.
- Motes, W. H., Hilton, C. B., & Fielden, J. S. (1992). Language, sentence, and structural variations in print advertising. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32(5), 63-77.
- Igou, E. R., & Bless, H. (2007). Conversational expectations as a basis for order effects in persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26(3), 260-273.
- O'Keefe, D. J., & Jackson, S. (1995). Argument quality and persuasive effects: A review of current approaches. In S. Jackson (Ed.), *Argumentation and values: Proceedings of the Ninth SCA/AFA conference on argumentation* (pp. 88-92). Annandale, VA: SCA.
- Reynolds, R. A., & Reynolds, J. L. (2002). Evidence. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 427-444). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hoeken, H. (2001). Anecdotal, statistical, and causal evidence: Their perceived and actual persuasiveness. *Argumentation*, 15, 425-437.

**February 7**                    Narrative and Statistical Forms of Evidence (message example due)

- Kreuter, M. W., Green, M. C., Capella, J. N., Slater, M. D., Wise, M. E., Storey, D., et al. (2007). Narrative communication in cancer prevention and control: A framework to guide research and application. *Annals of Behavioral Medicine*, 33(3), 221-235.
- Greene, K., & Brinn, L. S. (2003). Messages influencing college women's tanning bed use: Statistical versus narrative evidence format and a self-assessment to increase perceived susceptibility. *Journal of Health Communication*, 8, 443-461.
- Kopfman, J. E., Smith, S. W., Ah Yun, J. K., & Hodges, A. (1998). Affective and cognitive reactions to narrative versus statistical evidence organ donation messages. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 26, 279-300.
- Slater, M. D., & Rouner, D. (1996). Value-affirmative and value-protective processing of alcohol education messages that include statistical evidence or anecdotes. *Communication Research*, 23(2), 210-235.
- Allen, M., Bruflat, R., Fucilla, R., Kramer, M., McKellips, S., Ryan, D. J., & Spiegelhoff, M. (2000). Testing the persuasiveness of evidence: Combining narrative and statistical forms. *Communication Research Reports*, 17(4), 331-336.

**February 14**      Argument Structure (message example due)

- Lowrey, T. M. (1998). The effects of syntactic complexity on advertising persuasiveness. *Journal of Consumer Psychology, 7*(2), 187-206.
- Hafer, C. L., Reynolds, K. L., & Obertynski, M. A. (1996). Message comprehensibility and persuasion: Effects of complex language in counterattitudinal appeals to laypeople. *Social Cognition, 14*(4), 317-337.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (1999). How to handle opposing arguments in persuasive messages: A meta-analytic review of the effects of one-sided and two-sided messages. *Communication Yearbook, 22*, pp. 209-249.
- O'Keefe, D. J. (2002). The persuasive effects of variation in standpoint articulation. In F. H. van Eemeren (Ed.), *Advances in pragma-dialectics* (pp. 65-82). Amsterdam: Sic Sat.
- Searleman, A., & Carter, H. (1988). The effectiveness of different types of pragmatic implications found in commercials to mislead subjects. *Applied Cognitive Psychology, 2*, 265-272.
- Blankenship, K. L., & Craig, T. Y. (2006). Rhetorical question use and resistance to persuasion: An attitude strength analysis. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 25*(2), 111-128.

**February 21**      Figurative Language (message example due)

- McGuire, W. J. (2000). Standing on the shoulders of ancients: Consumer research, persuasion, and figurative language. *Journal of Consumer Research, 27*(1), 109-114.
- McQuarrie, E. F., & Mick, D. G. (1996). Figures of rhetoric in advertising language. *Journal of Consumer Research, 22*(4), 424-438.
- McQuarrie, E. F., & Mick, D. G. (2003). Visual and verbal rhetorical figures under directed processing versus incidental exposure to advertising. *Journal of Consumer Research, 29*(4), 579-587.
- Sopory, P., & Dillard, J. P. (2002). Figurative language and persuasion. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 407-426). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Davis, J. (2007). The effect of qualifying language on perceptions of drug appeal, drug experience, and estimates of side-effect incidence in DTC advertising. *Journal of Health Communication, 12*, 607-622.

**February 28**      Powerful/Powerless Language (message example due)

- Hosman, L. A. (1989). The evaluative consequences of hedges, hesitations, and intensifiers: Powerful and powerless speech styles. *Human Communication Research, 15*(3), 383-406.
- Hosman, L. A., Huebner, T. M., & Siltanen, S. A. (2002). The impact of power-of-speech style, argument strength, and need for cognition on impression formation, cognitive responses, and persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 21*(4), 361-379.
- Blankenship, K. L., & Holtgraves, T. (2005). The role of different markers of linguistic powerlessness in persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 24*(1), 3-24.
- Blankenship, K. L., & Craig, T. Y. (2007). Language and persuasion: Tag questions as powerless speech or as interpreted in context. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 43*, 112-118.
- Durik, A. M., Britt, M. A., Reynolds, R., & Storey, J. (2008). The effects of hedges in persuasive arguments: A nuanced analysis of language. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 27*(3), 217-234.

**March 7**                      Language Intensity and Vividness (message example due)

- Bradac, J. J., Bowers, J. W., & Courtright, J. A. (1979). Three language variables in communication research: Intensity, immediacy, and diversity. *Human Communication Research*, 5(3), 257-269.
- Hamilton, M. A., Hunter, J. E., & Burgoon, M. (1990). An empirical test of an axiomatic model of the relationship between language intensity and persuasion. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 9(4), 235-255.
- Keller, P. A., & Block, L. G. (1997). Vividness effects: A resource-matching perspective. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24, 295-304.
- Block, L. G., & Keller, P. A. (1997). Effects of self-efficacy and vividness on the persuasiveness of health communications. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 6(1), 31-54.
- Frey, K. P., & Eagly, A. H. (1993). Vividness can undermine the persuasiveness of messages. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 65(1), 32-44.
- Smith, S. M., & Shaffer, D. R. (2000). Vividness can undermine or enhance message processing: The moderating role of vividness congruency. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(7), 769-779.
- Collins, R. L., Taylor, S. E., Wood, J. V., & Thompson, S. C. (1988). The vividness effect: Elusive or illusory? *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 24, 1-18.

**March 14**                      *No Class, Spring Break*

**March 21**                      *Catch Our Breath/Take Stock/Research Proposal Discussion Day*

**March 28**                      Emotions (message example due)

- Nabi, R. L. (2002). Discrete emotions and persuasion. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 289-308). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dillard, J. P., & Nabi, R. L. (2006). The persuasive influence of emotion in cancer prevention and detection messages. *Journal of Communication*, 56, S123-S139.
- Witte, K. (1992). Putting the fear back into fear appeals: The Extended Parallel Process Model. *Communication Monographs*, 59, 329-349.
- Dillard, J. P., Plotnick, C. A., Godbold, L. C., Freimuth, V. S., & Edgar, T. (1996). The multiple affective outcomes of AIDS PSAs: Fear appeals do more than scare people. *Communication Research*, 23(1), 44-72.
- Huhmann, B. A., & Brotherton, T. P. (1997). A content analysis of guilt appeals in popular magazine advertisements. *Journal of Advertising*, 26(2), 35-45.
- Weinberger, M. G., & Gulas, C. S. (1992). The impact of humor in advertising: A review. *Journal of Advertising*, 21(4), 35-59.

**April 4**                      Message Sensation Value (message example due)

- Donohew, L., Lorch, E. P., & Palmgreen, P. (1998). Applications of a theoretic model of information exposure to health interventions. *Human Communication Research*, 24(3), 454-468.
- Morgan, S. E., Palmgreen, P., Stephenson, M. T., Hoyle, R. H., & Lorch, E. P. (2003). Associations between message features and subjective evaluations of the sensation value of antidrug public service announcements. *Journal of Communication*, 53(3), 512-526.
- Noar, S. M., Palmgreen, P., Zimmerman, R. S., Lustria, M. L. A., & Lu, H. (2010). Assessing the relationship between perceived message sensation value and perceived message effectiveness: Analysis of PSAs from an effective campaign. *Communication Studies*, 61(1), 21-45.
- Niederdeppe, J. D. (2005). Syntactic indeterminacy, perceived message sensation value-enhancing features, and message processing in the context of anti-tobacco advertisements. *Communication Monographs*, 72(3), 324-344.
- Kang, Y., Cappella, J., & Fishbein, M. (2006). The attentional mechanism of message sensation value: Interaction between message sensation value and argument quality on message effectiveness. *Communication Monographs*, 73(4), 351-378.
- Langleben, D. D., Loughhead, J. W., Ruparel, K., Hakun, J. G., Busch-Winokur, S., Holloway, M. B. ... Lerman, C. (2009). Reduced prefrontal and temporal processing and recall of high "sensation value" ads. *NeuroImage*, 46, 219-225.

**April 11**                      Message Framing (message example due)

- Salovey, P., Schneider, T. R., & Apanovitch, A. M. (2002). Message framing in the prevention and early detection of illness. In J. P. Dillard & M. Pfau (Eds.), *The persuasion handbook: Developments in theory and practice* (pp. 391-406). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Detweiler, J. B., Bedell, B. T., Salovey, P., Pronin, E., & Rothman, A. J. (1999). Message framing and sunscreen use: Gain-framed messages motivate beach-goers. *Health Psychology, 18*(2), 189-196.
- Schneider, T. R., Salovey, P., Apanovitch, A. M., Pizarro, J., McCarthy, D., Zullo, J., & Rothman, A. J. (2001). The effects of message framing and ethnic targeting on mammography use among low-income women. *Health Psychology, 20*(4), 256-266.
- O'Keefe, D. J., & Jensen, J. D. (2006). The advantages of compliance or the disadvantages of noncompliance? A meta-analytic review of the relative persuasive effectiveness of gain-framed and loss-framed messages. *Communication Yearbook, 30*, 1-43.
- O'Keefe, D. J., & Jensen, J. D. (in press). The relative effectiveness of gain-framed and loss-framed persuasive appeals concerning obesity-related behaviors: Meta-analytic evidence and implications. In P. A. Keller, V. J. Strecher, & R. Batra (Eds.), *Leveraging consumer psychology for effective health communications*. Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe.
- Latimer, A. E., Salovey, P., & Rothman, A. J. (2007). The effectiveness of gain-framed messages for encouraging disease prevention behavior: Is all hope lost? *Journal of Health Communication, 12*, 645-649.

**April 18**                      Tailored Messaging

- Noar, S. M., Harrington, N. G., & Aldrich, R. S. (2009). The role of message tailoring in the development of persuasive health communication messages. *Communication Yearbook, 33*, 73-133.
- Prochaska, J. O., Velicer, W. F., Fava, J. L., Ruggiero, L., Laforge, R. G., Rossi, J. S., et al. (2001). Counselor and stimulus control enhancements of a stage-matched expert system intervention for smokers in a managed care setting. *Preventive Medicine, 32*, 23-32.
- Brug, J., Glanz, K., Van Assema, P., Kok, G., & van Breukelen, G. J. P. (1998). The impact of computer-tailored feedback and iterative feedback on fat, fruit, and vegetable intake. *Health Education & Behavior, 25*(4), 517-531.
- Williams-Piehot, P., Schneider, T. R., Pizarro, J., Mowad, L., & Salovey, P. (2003). Matching health messages to information-processing styles: Need for cognition and mammography utilization. *Health Communication, 15*(4), 375-392.
- Simon-Arndt, C. M., Hurtado, S. L., & Patriarca-Troyk, L. A. (2006). Acceptance of Web-based personalized feedback: User ratings of an alcohol misuse prevention program targeting U. S. marines. *Health Communication, 20*(1), 13-22.
- Evers, K. E., Prochaska, J. O., Van Marter, D. F., Johnson, J. L., & Prochaska, J. M. (2007). Transtheoretical-based bullying prevention effectiveness trials in middle schools and high schools. *Education Research, 49*(4), 397-414.

**April 25**                      Macro-level and Comprehensive Design Considerations

- Berry, T. R., Wharf-Higgins, J., & Naylor, P.J. (2007). SARS Wars: An examination of the quantity and construction of health information in the news media. *Health Communication, 21*(1), 35-44.
- DeSantis, A. D., & Morgan, S. E. (2003). Sometimes a cigar [magazine] is more than just a cigar [magazine]: Pro-smoking arguments in Cigar Aficionado, 1992-2000. *Health Communication, 15*(4), 457-480.
- Rimal, R. N., & Real, K. (2003). Understanding the influence of perceived norms on behaviors. *Communication Theory, 13*(2), 184-203.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2003). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 12*(4), 105-109.
- Buller, D. B., Borland, R., & Burgoon, M. (1998). Impact of behavioral intention on effectiveness of message features: Evidence from the Family Sun Safety project. *Human Communication Research, 24*(3), 433-453.

**May 2**                              Research Proposal Presentations