



## **COMM 415: Medical Communication**

Spring 2018

Tuesdays and Thursdays 4:00-5:15pm

Rayzor Hall 106

Instructor: Dr. Christine Wieseler

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Office hours by appointment in Brochstein Pavilion

3 Credits

### **Course Description**

The medical interview is performed more often than any other procedure in medicine. We typically recognize the medical interview as a tool whereby the physician gathers information about the patient's symptoms in the attempt to make a diagnosis. Importantly, the physician and patient also learn a great deal about each other in the process. For example, patients assess the trustworthiness of their physicians. Effective communication is essential in clinical practice. Whether or not patients understand their conditions, adhere to proposed treatments, or return for future appointment depends, in part, on how well physicians communicate. Thus, the stakes are high. However, there are numerous barriers to effective communication. Assumptions related to social identity categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability serve as significant obstacles. In this course, we will examine these challenges as well as theories and evidence-based strategies for successful communication by engaging with texts, videos, guest speakers, and each other. Students will develop their communication skills through in-class activities and written assignments.

### **Course Materials**

The required course text is *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* by Eli Clare (Duke University Press, 2017). This book is available in the campus bookstore. All other course readings will be available as PDFs on Canvas or through links.

### **Accessibility**

I encourage disabled students to consult with me as soon as possible, preferably at the beginning of the semester so that we can work together to figure out the best way to eliminate barriers to your success in this class. If you have a disability that may affect academic performance and you would like to request an accommodation, the University requires that you: 1) provide documentation to Disability Support Services (Allen Center, Room 111 / [adarice@rice.edu](mailto:adarice@rice.edu) / (713)348-5841) to determine the accommodations you need; and 2) meet with me to discuss your accommodation needs.

### **Recording**

You may not record audio or video of class meetings without consent from the instructor.

## **Course Information**

This class will be discussion-based rather than lecture-based. Bring a paper or electronic copy of the text to class on all days with assigned readings. Make sure to check your Rice email frequently, as this is the means by which I will communicate with you outside of class.

## **Course Objectives**

1. Identify obstacles to effective doctor-patient communication and develop strategies to address them.
2. Examine own assumptions regarding social identities and physical characteristics through in-class discussion and written reflections.
3. Demonstrate the ability to speak and write in a clear and appropriate manner for a non-expert audience.
4. Analyze the impact of social values in medicine.

## **Assignments**

Reading reflections (15%)

Presentations (20%)

Participation (10%)

Mid-term paper (10%)

Final Paper (20%)

Worksheets and in-class assignments (20%)

Attend and respond to a lecture or other event (5%)

## **Grading Scale**

The grade scale for this course will be as follows:

A+	98 and above
A	93-97
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	63-67
D-	60-62
F	59 and below

I round up averages of .5 or above.

Grade	Examples of How to Earn this Grade for Participation
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absent or</li> <li>• Present and disruptive to classmates/the instructor</li> <li>• Texts in class</li> <li>• Sleeps in class</li> <li>• Is not engaged and does not contribute to the class discussion</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present, not disruptive</li> <li>• Attempts to answer questions when called on but does not offer much</li> <li>• Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows evidence of having completed the reading but not of having thought carefully about the content</li> <li>• Offers straightforward information from the reading without elaboration</li> <li>• Does not offer to contribute to discussion but contributes a moderate amount when called on</li> <li>• Demonstrates infrequent involvement in discussion</li> </ul>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows evidence of good preparation: not only of completion of the reading but of having thought carefully about it</li> <li>• Offers interpretations and analyses of the reading</li> <li>• Makes multiple contributions to discussion by: responding to other students and posing questions in a constructive way</li> <li>• Demonstrates consistent involvement in discussion</li> </ul>
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shows evidence of excellent preparation: has analyzed the reading well, relating it to other discussions, experiences, course materials, etc.</li> <li>• Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of the reading, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop approaches that advance the class discussion</li> <li>• Contributes in a significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps comments focused, responds thoughtfully to others students' remarks, suggests alternative ways of approaching material.</li> </ul>

Adapted from Maznevski, Martha. 1996. "Grading Class Participation." *Newsletter of the Teaching Resource Center for Faculty and Teaching Assistants*.

### **Honor Code/Plagiarism**

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are violations of the Rice Honor Code and will be reported to the Honor Council. The Honor Council defines plagiarism as "quoting, paraphrasing, or otherwise using another's words or ideas as one's own without properly crediting the source. (...) The Honor Council assumes that, unless otherwise credited, all work submitted by the student is intended to be considered as his or her own work. Any time a student draws particularly or generally from another's work, the source should be properly credited."

**Electronic devices**

You may use laptops and tablets to access course material during class. Texting and other use of electronic devices for non-course related tasks are unacceptable because they show disrespect and distract from learning. I reserve the right to prohibit use of electronic devices if this policy is violated.

**Absences**

Although I will not be taking attendance, it is important that you attend class. Missing multiple class meetings will result in a reduction of your participation grade. Some of the course assignments will be completed during class. Since this is a discussion-based class, much of the learning will take place in the classroom.

**Appointments**

I do not have set office hours, but I am happy to meet with you by appointment. Please do not ask me about meeting with you on the same day that you are asking. Meetings usually last around 20 minutes. Please arrive prepared with questions or let me know ahead of time if there is a specific assignment you would like to discuss. Unless otherwise noted, all meetings will be held in the Brochstein Pavilion.

**Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication**

You are encouraged to make appointments with peer consultants at the Center for Written, Oral, and Visual Communication for course assignments. Consultants will not proofread or edit your work, but they will provide feedback on areas such as organization of a paper or presentation, arguments, sentence structure, and grammatical errors. The Center is located on the second floor mezzanine of the Fondren Library. You can make an appointment at [cwovc.rice.edu](http://cwovc.rice.edu). Bring a paper copy of your essay and assignment guidelines to your appointment. You may also make an appointment to practice a presentation.

## Course Schedule

Details on this calendar may change. If I change anything, I will notify you in advance whenever possible. All readings and assignments are due on the date listed.

January 9: Introduction (no reading)

January 11: “The Medical Interview” pp. 1-11 in *Smith’s Patient-Centered Interviewing* by Auguste Fortin et al.; “The Language of Medicine” pp. 166-178 in *What Patients Say, What Doctors Hear* by Danielle Ofri

January 16: “Rushing to Judgment” pp. 179-193 in *What Patients Say, What Doctors Hear* by Danielle Ofri

January 18: “Patient-Caregiver Communication” pp. 42-70 in *Communicating about Health* by Athena du Pré

January 23: No class

January 25: “Patient Perspectives” pp. 71-92 in *Communicating about Health* by Athena du Pré;  
**Reading reflection #1 due**

January 30: Reading TBA

**Guest lecturer: Ms. Rebecca Lunstroth, J.D., McGovern Center for Humanities and Ethics, McGovern Medical School, University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston**

February 1: Chapters 1-2 of *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* by Eli Clare

February 6: Chapters 3-5 of *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* by Eli Clare

**Reading reflection #2 due**

February 8: No class

February 13: Chapters 6-7 of *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* by Eli Clare

February 15: Chapters 8-10 of *Brilliant Imperfection: Grappling with Cure* by Eli Clare

**Reading reflection #3 due**

February 20: “Epistemic Injustice in Medicine and Healthcare” by Havi Carel and Ian James Kidd pp. 336-344

February 22: “Language Barriers to Health Care in the United States” (Flores, *New England Journal of Medicine*)

**Guest lecturer- Dr. Mabel Cuesta, Hispanic Studies, University of Houston**

February 27: **Draft of mid-term paper due for in-class peer review**

March 1: selections from *More than Ramps: A Guide to Improving Health Care Quality for People with Disabilities* by Lisa Iezzoni and Bonnie O’Day

March 6: **Mid-term paper due**

March 8: “Intersectionality and the Dangers of White Empathy when Treating Black Patients” by Keisha Ray; “The People’s Free Medical Clinics” pp. 75-114 *Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* by Alondra Nelson

March 13: No Class (Spring Break)

March 15: No Class (Spring Break)

March 20: “As American as Cherry Pie: Contesting the Biologization of Violence” pp. 153-180  
*Body and Soul: The Black Panther Party and the Fight against Medical Discrimination* by  
Alondra Nelson

March 22: “White Supremacy, Mass Incarceration, and Clinical Medicine: A Critical Analysis of  
U.S. Correctional Healthcare” by Andrea Pitts pp. 267-285 **Reading reflection #4 due**  
**Guest lecturer- Dr. Andrea Pitts, Department of Philosophy, University of North Carolina,  
Charlotte**

March 27: “Letting Go: What should Medicine do when it can’t Save your life?” by Atul  
Gawande; SPIKES Protocol—A Six-Step Protocol for Delivering Bad News: Application to the  
Patient with Cancer” by Baile et al. pp. 302-309

March 29: No class

April 3: (watch Frontline documentary “Being Mortal” with Atul Gawande); read advance  
directive documents **Reading reflection #5 due on “Being Mortal”**

April 5: No reading assignment

**Guest lecturer: Dr. Wyona Freysteinson, Department of Nursing, Texas Woman’s  
University**

April 10: “Healing the Healer” pp. 157-177 in *Attending: Medicine, Mindfulness, and Humanity*  
by Ronald Epstein

**Guest lecturer: Dr. Anson Koshy, Medical Director, Children’s Learning Institute**

April 12: Presentations

April 17: Presentations

April 19: Course wrap-up

May 1: **Final paper due**