



## **IDC 6090-900 Medical Communications—Redux**

### **Course Syllabus 1.6**

**Summer Semester 2007**

#### **INSTRUCTOR**

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By appointment

#### **COMMUNICATIONS**

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#### **COURSE LOCATION AND TIME**

WebCT Vista, Horizon Live Classroom, course listserv.

This is a totally online course with no scheduled face-to-face meetings. Some online meetings are asynchronous (any time) and some are synchronous (refer to course schedule and instructor communications via course listserv).

## INTRODUCTION

This course syllabus provides a general outline or plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary and will be provided in writing in advance of implementation. It is my desire to create a course which best meets your personal and professional goals as these relate to your current competencies in the general area of medical communications.

This is the instructor's fifth course on medical communications, but the first delivered entirely online. Adjustments are to be expected. Student feedback is encouraged and valued. A discussion board for course feedback will be provided on the course WebCT site.

As this is a graduate level course attended primarily by working professionals, we will be learning together. The instructor will provide a structure for the course plus didactic and reading content, but student discourse and collaborative work are essential in making the course a success. Your professional experience and what you learn as we progress are intended to be major portions of the course.

This course is adapted from an SPSU course developed and refined by Dr. Lynn Stockton. Her work and generosity are acknowledged, as are the substantial contributions of various community health care and medical communications professionals.

## CATALOG DESCRIPTION

Course examines the scope of medical communication. Students produce, edit, or analyze samples of such documents as patient information brochures, medical advertisements, pharmaceutical package inserts, and medical research papers.

## INSTRUCTOR'S DESCRIPTION

Medical communications is concerned with how medical and health related information is constructed by communities of experts and delivered to consumers. This is an Internet-delivered course<sup>1</sup> designed to introduce, apply, and refine the fundamentals of medical communications as a focus for the technical communication student or professional. This is a hands-on, collaborative, and highly participatory course requiring students to conduct discourse, reflect, write, and complete projects and assignments to be shared with the class. Students will study various aspects of medical communications including professional journal articles and abstracts, public health messages, patient and health care provider education, and health care writing for low literacy audiences. The emphasis in this course is on **doing**; successful students will leave the class with the knowledge and experience required to seek out professional writing opportunities in medical communications, and apply their writing and editing skills in this arena.

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<sup>1</sup> Please try to be somewhere most of the time.

## COURSE LEARNING GOALS

This course provides an introduction and application of the fundamentals of medical communications. There is latitude for the student to approach the course in a way that best suits his/her background and interests.<sup>2</sup> The overall goals of this course are to:

1. Demonstrate a working familiarity with medical terminology.
2. Identify and describe the place of the technical writer in the medical industry.
3. Engage in a body of research spanning scientific inquiry and health care delivery.
4. Prepare a portfolio of writing projects in the field of medical communications.
5. Identify the primary publications, professional resources, and professional organizations in the field of medical communications.

## COURSE OVERVIEW

Each student will choose a significant medical condition (disease/injury/disorder), which will serve as the theme of most assignments. The condition must have at least one pharmaceutical (drug) treatment available. Conditions selected should be **unique** in the class (selected on a first-come-first-served basis).

Students will work in pairs of “writing buddies” to critique one another’s work throughout the semester. In this way, each student will receive feedback from at least two persons on each writing effort.

## DELIVERABLES

1. **Medical terminology quizzes.** Five quizzes, based on the five chapters in the medical terminology text, will be given. Questions are drawn directly from the self-study text. Medical terminology content is not directly covered in class activities. Quizzes are administered via WebCT on the honor system. (25 points)
2. **Topical presentation.** An online presentation on the student’s selected medical condition topic. The target audience is the class, although a different target audience (health care professionals, patients) may be chosen. This is a professional presentation to include audiovisual elements and handout materials, if appropriate. Horizon Live Classroom will be used to deliver topical presentations. (15 points)

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<sup>2</sup> Offer void where prohibited by law.

3. **Participation and contributions to class (discussion board and course listserv) discussions.** This is an important element in the conduct of the course, and will be graded subjectively by instructor impression of overall student performance in this area. Both extent and quality of participation in class dialogue will determine the score, to be awarded at midterm and at the end of the course. (15 points)

- ☞ Caution: Score in this area is primarily determined by the **quality** of contributions. The best advice is that no student should either dominate or abstain. Keeping abreast of reading assignments will be evident in participation of online and classroom discussion.
- ☞ Note: All class sessions are conducted entirely online. Most sessions are asynchronous (flexible student access time) but some are synchronous (all students “attending” a live session conducted online).
- ☞ Note: Feedback quality and timeliness in writing partner exercises directly affects participation score.

4. **Medical professional event.** Identify a local event related to medical communications, attend, and write a brief (one paragraph) summary to be posted on the WebCT website. (5 points)

5. **Medical writing portfolio.** Students will prepare a portfolio of medical writing projects based on the selected medical condition:

- **Scientific abstract**
- **Press release**
- **Feature article**—students will submit either a feature article to a target publication, or a query letter to write a feature article.
- **Patient information brochure about a drug or device** used to treat the condition OR **Patient information brochure about the condition**

Another type of medical information may be substituted for any of the five (e.g., CBT, WBT, marketing piece); please clear with the instructor in advance. (40 points)

- ☞ Note: Students receive feedback from “writing buddies” on all writing assignments, and from the instructor on request (after incorporating writing partner feedback). However, **only two writing assignments will be formally graded.** The entire portfolio of five items is submitted during the week of the last class session. The student identifies one item as a “flagship” piece to be graded. Another item is selected at random by the instructor and will be graded. Each item earns a maximum of 20 points.

## FABULOUS PRIZES

For some exercises, Winners will receive



students will vote for the best writing effort. fabulous prizes (to be announced).

## EXAMINATIONS

This course is performance based. There will be no examinations beyond the five medical terminology quizzes.

## GRADING

<i>Item</i>	<i>Point Value</i>
<b>Medical Terminology Quizzes (5)</b>	25
<b>Topical Presentation</b>	15
<b>Classroom &amp; Online Participation</b>	15
<b>Medical Communications Professional Event</b>	5
<b>Medical Writing Portfolio</b>	40
<b>Total</b>	100

The grading system is based upon regular and active participation in classroom activities and the completion, on time, of all assignments. Any assignment turned in late will be subject to a 10% grade reduction for each late day, or portion. No late assignments will be accepted for credit after the last week of the semester.

<i>Grade</i>	<i>Points</i>
<b>A</b>	93 – 100
<b>B</b>	83 – 92
<b>C</b>	73 – 82
<b>D</b>	63 – 72
<b>F</b>	< 63

## COURSE SCHEDULE

<b>Week</b>	<b>of</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Due</b>	<b>Reading</b>
<b>1</b>	5/14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Course expectations</li> <li>– Course overview</li> <li>– Course technology</li> <li>– Scope of medical communications</li> <li>– Medical communications as a profession</li> <li>– Careers in Medical Communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– feature article review</li> <li>– medical condition topic</li> </ul>	Chabner Ch. 1 lles Chs. 1-4 & Ch. 7
<b>2</b>	5/21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Galileo/Medline/PubMed</li> <li>– Guest Peter Shipman</li> <li>– Medical editing 1</li> <li>– Med. Term. Quiz Ch. 1</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– feature article review</li> </ul>	Chabner Ch. 2 lles Chs. 5 - 6
<b>3</b>	5/28	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Medical editing 2</li> <li>– Research articles &amp; abstracts</li> <li>– Med. Term. Quiz Ch. 2</li> </ul>		Chabner Ch. 3 lles Chs. 8 - 9

4	6/4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Writing about disabilities</li> <li>- Writing for low literacy audiences</li> <li>- Med. Term. Quiz Ch. 3</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- abstract</li> </ul>	Chabner Ch. 4 Iles Chs. 10 - 11
5	6/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public health messages</li> <li>- Health literacy</li> <li>- Journal production</li> <li>- Guest Leslie Neistadt</li> <li>- Med. Term. Quiz Ch. 4</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- press release</li> </ul>	Chabner Ch. 5 Iles Ch. 12
6	6/18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public health messages</li> <li>- PR, ads, marketing</li> <li>- Guest D'Lovely Gibson</li> <li>- Med. Term. Quiz Ch. 5</li> </ul>		
7	6/25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Public health messages</li> <li>- Pharmacology &amp; regulatory writing</li> <li>- Education &amp; sales</li> <li>- Guest Karen Boudin</li> <li>- Student presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- patient information on drug/device or medical theme</li> </ul>	
8	7/2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student presentations</li> <li>- Course review &amp; evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- feature article</li> <li>- portfolios</li> </ul>	

☞ Note: Shading indicates synchronous Horizon session.

☞ Note: Reading assignments should be completed **before** the class exercise.

☞ Note: Assignments are posted online in appropriate dropboxes, and are due at midnight Saturday of the class week (unless otherwise directed by instructor).

## TEXTS

### Required

Chabner, D. (2005). *Medical terminology: A short course*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders Co.

Iles, R. L. (1997). *Guidebook to better medical writing*. Olathe, Kansas: Iles Publications.

## **TECHNICAL SUPPORT**

Address technical support issues in the following order:

1. Review the technical pearls discussion thread on the course WebCT site.
2. Post a request for help on the course listserv.
3. Email SPSU distance learning coordinator Brichaya Shah at [bshah@spsu.edu](mailto:bshah@spsu.edu), or phone 678.915.3166.
4. Email instructor directly.

## **TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS**

This is an Internet-conducted course. Course elements will be delivered entirely online. At a minimum, the student must have:

- Regular access to the World Wide Web, via either home computer connection or institutional equipment.
- Web-enabled computer with speakers and microphone.
- A viable email address and regular access to an email provider. Email is available to all Southern Polytechnic State University students. Free email accounts are also available at a number of online services, including Netscape and Yahoo.
- Regular access to a computer with processing speed, local storage, graphics capability, word processing software, and other hardware, software, and performance elements appropriate for graduate students using current Internet browsers.

## **TECHNICAL SKILLS**

Successful participation in this course assumes that the student arrives with a basic set of computer-related technical skills, including but not limited to the following:

- Keyboarding and mousing
- Connecting to the World Wide Web (WWW)
- File management (opening, saving, sharing files such as word processing files and PDF files)
- Email application (receiving, reading, printing, composing, sending, managing email messages and attachments)
- Working familiarity with the WWW and an Internet browser (such as Netscape Navigator and Microsoft Internet Explorer), including navigating, searching, bookmarking, downloading files, and uploading files.

These skills will not be addressed in this course, except incidentally, and the student must assume responsibility for mastering them. Southern Polytechnic University, various tutorials and technical resources on the WWW, and major bookstores are suggested as resources for self-directed learning. Fellow students are often an excellent resource for help with technical matters.

## **INTERNET BROWSER**

Some elements of this course work best using Microsoft Internet Explorer, rather than Netscape Navigator. This is because some proprietary software simply "does not play well with others." This is most noticeable in online PowerPoint presentations. All major Internet browsers are adequate for the purposes of this course. Note the following recommendations:

- Use the most current browser version that your hardware can accommodate.
- If you currently use Netscape Navigator, consider downloading Internet Explorer to view course elements that are troublesome in Netscape. Be aware that downloading an Internet Browser via a phone modem can take a LONG TIME.

## **ADOBE ACROBAT READER**

Some course elements are provided in Adobe PDF (Portable Document Format) files, which require Adobe Acrobat Reader. This is a FREE plug-in available for download on the Internet. It allows you to open, read, search, and print documents saved in this file format. PDF is a file type that allows information to be presented over the web while maintaining its exact look and feel, regardless of the fonts the user has installed on his/her local PC. PDF files can be viewed on any computer that has the Adobe Acrobat Reader software. To download the Adobe Acrobat Reader, visit:

<http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep.html>

## COURSE LISTSERV

This course provides a listserv for housekeeping purposes. Occasionally, course content messages may also be distributed via the listserv. A listserv is an email application that automatically distributes a single posted message to all subscribers to the list. There are two purposes for the course listserv:

1. To provide a professional listserv experience for all IDC 6090-900 students. Listservs are widely used in professional circles related to performance technology and technical communication.
2. To serve as a course housekeeping communications medium. Listservs are simple, reliable technology requiring only an email capability.

As this is a compressed semester, the instructor will subscribe students to the listserv. It is the student's responsibility to check course email messages frequently (not less than several times per week)

To **post** a message to the IDC 6090-900 listserv:

Send the email message to: **IDC-6090-900-L@listserv.uga.edu**

When you post a listserv message or reply to a listserv email message, the message is **sent to everyone on the list** plus the instructor.

Further information about USG listservs may be found at:

<http://listserv.uga.edu/>

The course listserv will be deactivated when the course ends. It is not necessary to unsubscribe.

## HORIZON LIVE CLASSROOM

Some course sessions will be conducted synchronously and online using Horizon Live Classroom. This technology permits real time, two-way voice communication plus classroom-like lectures and student group activity. The instructor will notify the class in advance of sessions using Horizon Live Classroom.

☞ Note: Prior to our first Horizon Live Classroom session, visit the Horizon Wimba website and use the wizard to confirm that your computer system is properly configured: <http://www.horizonwimba.com/>  
Click: Live Classroom Demo / Demonstration of Horizon Wimba's Powerlinks / SetupWizard  
Follow screen prompts to prepare and test your system.

☞ Note: Dial-up Internet service is generally not suitable for Horizon Live Classroom sessions. DSL or better bandwidth is important.

## **IMPATICA**

Some course sessions may be delivered using Impatica, a technology that compresses and streams narrated PowerPoint presentations over the Internet. For an overview of this technology, visit: <http://www.impatica.com/higher-ed/higher-ed.html>

Impatica requires a Java run-time environment, which may be downloaded and installed free from Sun-Java: <http://java.sun.com/j2se/1.4.2/download.html>

☞ Note: Microsoft JVM is not supported by Impatica.

In most cases, Impatica modules will only require the student to click on a link from the WebCT course website. No plug-ins or special software required. Students will experience a narrated lecture, with VCR-like playback controls. Although one-way, Impatica technology permits a near lecture experience with acceptable (although not spectacular) sound quality.

☞ Note: Impatica is designed for acceptable performance via slow dial-up Internet connections; however, DSL is preferred.

☞ Note: It is likely that laptop speakers will not provide adequate sound volume. External speakers are recommended.

## **MICROSOFT PRODUCER**

Some course sessions will be delivered using Microsoft Producer, a technology that streams high fidelity, narrated PowerPoint presentations over the Internet. For an overview of this technology, visit:

<http://www.microsoft.com/windows/windowsmedia/technologies/producer.msp>

Producer requires Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator, and is not Macintosh compatible.

☞ Note: Be sure to install Microsoft Media Player 9 or newer.

Microsoft Producer presentations load slowly, especially over slow Internet connections. Be patient. You may click the “Play” message to begin streaming immediately, but expect delays and sluggish performance.

## **WebCT VISTA**

Point your browser to:

<http://spsu.view.usg.edu/>

Click on the “Log in” link

In most cases, students will be automatically enrolled in WebCT Vista via the Banner system.

The WebCT Vista website is the focal point of this course. An essential first task for each student is to visit the course website, browse, and become familiar with the tools and resources. It is important to visit the course website frequently, not less than several times each week. Housekeeping messages as well as content are placed here and the student is responsible for keeping abreast. Not all WebCT options will be used in this course. Particularly important are the following online elements:

- Syllabus — the latest iteration of the course syllabus is available as a website page and as a downloadable, printable PDF file. The syllabus is likely to change as this course develops and incorporates student feedback. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that he/she has the current syllabus.
- Student grades — password-protected, current, and private.
- Course resources — a glossary, selected WWW links, table of abbreviations, and other items the student may find useful in this course.
- Discussion boards — for asynchronous, threaded discussions on class management and content topics. This is an important part of the course and meaningful participation contributes to the final grade.
- Chatrooms — for real time, live discussions. Some chat sessions are scheduled; others are at student discretion.
- Course map — provides a quick overview of the course.
- Student presentations — post assigned work and view the work of others in the class.
- Take notes — prepare custom notes on course content, discussions, and activities.
- Email addresses — students and instructor. (This course will **not** use WebCT's email feature).
- Home pages — students and instructors. Students are encouraged to link homepages to this course website. This is a great way to melt the ice, build a sense of community in the class, and add a bit of levity.
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## **ELECTRONIC RESERVES**

Some documents required in this course are placed on electronic reserve, courtesy SPSU's Lawrence V. Johnson Library. To access an electronic reserve document:

1. Point your browser to <http://gil.spsu.edu>
2. Choose search course reserves
3. Under instructor field choose Hopper  
and under course field choose the course number
4. Choose the title location in "Electronic Reserves"
5. Click the blue highlighted e-item title
6. Enter the password: (obtained from Gil Request)
7. **These are PDF files, which you can download and print.**

## **POLICIES**

This is intended to be a highly interactive course that depends upon your active participation in every activity.<sup>3</sup> This is also a course that is structured to maximize learning from your peers as well as from your instructor. If you miss a class activity, you are not available to learn from nor contribute to others in this class. As a result, much of what is missed cannot be "made up."

If you find it necessary to be absent or late for a synchronous (live) class session, please inform the instructor, via e-mail, (as soon as possible but not later than the following day) the reason for your absence or lateness.

**Students with Disabilities** who believe that they may need accommodations in this class should contact the counselor working with disabilities at 678.915.7244 right away to better ensure that they get the help they need quickly.

## **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the act of representing someone else's work as your own, either intentionally or unintentionally. In this course, plagiarism will result in a zero for the assignment and, possibly, a failing grade in the course. Be aware that current Internet search engines can quickly identify almost any previously published document.

## **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

A student who misses the presentation of a guest speaker will be publicly flogged and required to listen to four consecutive hours of Rush Limbaugh radio program archives. However, if SPSU's legal department objects to this consequence, an equivalent nonviolent substitute will be devised.

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<sup>3</sup> Contents may settle during shipping.