

Harvard School of Public Health Department of Health and Social Behavior

HSB 214c: Health Literacy - Winter 2001

Rima E. Rudd MSPH, ScD and TA Kimberly Kaphingst MA, ScM

M/W 1:30=3:20

Format: HSB214 is designed as a discussion seminar with several structured classes exercises. Participants share responsibilities for presentations and reading analyses.

Content: Course participants are introduced to the multi-layered links between health and literacy. Course readings, presentations and discussions enable participants to:

- X Examine definitions and implications of literacy and functional literacy measures;
- X Become familiar with national and international statistics on literacy with particular attention given to functional literacy;
- X Examine definitions and implications of functional *health literacy* and *health literacy* measures;
- X Use and analyze Cloze, SMOG, REALM, TOFHLA, I kirsh/Mosenthal, SAM
- X Assess methods and findings of studies of health print materials and documents;
- X Assess methods and findings of studies linking literacy and health outcomes;
- X Explore research gaps and silences;
- X Explore the application of adult education participatory pedagogy to public literacy efforts;
- X Consider collaborative work between the fields of adult education and health education.

Activities: Course participants engage analysis of readings and in several structured exercises designed to familiarize the participant with the adult learning system, health care facilities, measures of health literacy, and methods for assessing written materials.

Office Hours: Dr. Rudd and Ms. Kaphingst will post office hours. Dr. Rudd's office is Kresge 719. Ms. Kapingst [course teaching assistant and pre-doctoral health literacy fellow] will maintain office hours at the Health Literacy Studies Office on Tremont Street.

Appointments: rdudd@hsph.harvard.edu and kkaphing@hsph.harvard.edu

Assignments and Reports: All course members are expected to attend class sessions and participate in discussion and analysis of readings; conduct field observations and prepare four written documents:

- [1] Field observation and Brief Rpt #1 Adult Learning Center - due week 3
- [2] Field observation and Brief Rpt #2 Health Facility - due week 4
- [3] Assessment of Health materials/ forms and Brief Rpt #3 - due week 5
- [4] Final paper: focuses on a specialized area of inquiry based on issues related to:

- a specific population [e.g. elderly, ethnic groups, prisoners] or
- health challenge [e.g. HIV/AIDS or diabetes] or
- public health communication issues [consent, eligibility, disclosures, rights and responsibilities].

Report and paper parameters will be distributed in class. Groups meetings will be arranged to discuss protocols for all observations and needed follow up.

Readings: Course readings are drawn from international as well as U.S. based sources and include research reports as well as case studies. Required readings are assembled in a package of selected articles and also include web downloads, a manual, a text, and two novels.

Reading Packet: Selected readings have been assembled and are available in the department.

Required Texts:

- Doak, Doak, Root, *Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills* [text/manual]
- Purcell-Gates, *Other People's Words* [case study of an Appalachian family]
- Sapphire, *Push* [novel]*

**Note:* While Push is a very powerful novel, the reading experience can be disquieting. This book includes descriptions of sexual and emotional abuse. We respect the fact that some people may not choose to read the novel in the midst of class work. One chapter is required and will be noted in class.

- Choice of 2nd novel [see distributed list]
- Selected Web Sites starting with www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy

HSB214c: Health Literacy

General Overview of Weekly Sessions

[please note full syllabus with reading assignments included in reading packet]

Week 1

Focus: Introductions and Overview

- Introductions, course overview
- *Literacy:* discussion and reading exercise [simulation of new reader experience].
- Literacy as empowerment: Paulo Freire's pedagogy and influence
- Functional Literacy and contexts: work skills, health literacy
- Memo: Report and paper parameters.
- Memo: Observation protocols & assignments: people, places, context

Week 2 *Note: Review memo re: reports & final paper options*

Focus: Functional Literacy

- Research Findings from population and distribution studies [NALS, IALS, MassINC report]
- Research findings from studies re: use of health literacy measures [REALM and TOFHLA]
- Analysis: limits on participation: experiences of people with limited literacy skills

Assignment: Review protocols, plan visit to adult learning center and a neighboring health center in preparation for reports #1 [Adult Education Observation] and #2 [Health Facility Observation].

Week 3 *Note: Report #1 Observation in Adult Education Center Due*

Focus: The world of print – assumptions and demands

- Observation findings: adult education programs
- Discussion: issues of readability and review of studies across disease categories and types of health materials and forms
- Hands on: examination and application of tools for materials assessment [SMOG, SAM, IKIRSH-Moesenthal]
- Analysis: processes and assumptions

Assignment: Prepare Report #2 Observation in Health Care Facility; assemble

*Dr. R.E. Rudd
Department of Health and Social Behavior
Harvard School of Public Health*

materials for assessment report #3.

Week 4: *Note: Report #2 Observation in Health Care Facility Due*

Focus: Concept of 'health literacy'; available measures

- Observation findings: health care facilities
- Hands on: Cloze tests, REALM and TOFHLA
- Discussion of processes and assumptions
- Research findings and match between materials/skills
- Analyses: assumptions, jargon, background knowledge, shared context

Assignment: prepare Report #3 materials assessment

Week 5: *Note: Report #3 Materials Assessment Due*

Focus: Navigation and the demands of the health care system

- Assessment findings: materials and forms used in public health/medicine
- Navigating the health care system: challenges and barriers [slides]
- Discussion: literacy demands of a health facility & locus of change
- Analysis: issues related to shame, efficacy, empowerment

Assignment: Prepare Memo re: final paper

Week 6 *Note: submit final paper memo*

Focus: Health Outcome Studies and Emerging Hypotheses

- Discussion: foundation work of LeVine's international studies and case examples
- Discussion: findings, implications, limitations in health literacy explorations
- Analysis: implications of the Freirean Model

Week 7

Focus: Research Silences, Implications

- Discussion: Communication patterns and links: schooling/reading /verbal /oral /aural skills, background information, cultural assumptions
- Analysis: expanding definitions of health literacy and implications/limitations of the Freirean Model

Week 8 *Note: Final Paper due*

Focus: Health literacy issues and research implications

- Presentations: study explorations
- Analysis: literacy demands, locus of change, emerging hypotheses

HSB 214c Sample of Reading Selections

[note: samples only, this listing is regularly updated]

Functional Literacy

- X Kirsch, et al, Adult Literacy in American
- X *The National Literacy Act of 1991*
- X Reder, The State of Literacy in America
- X Tuijnman, Benchmarking Adult Literacy in America

People in Context

- X Purcell-Gates, Other People's Words
- X Sapphire, PUSH
- X Kozol, Illiterate America
- X Murnane and Levy, Teaching the New Basic Skills
- X Comings et al, *New Skills for a New Economy*, MassI NC Report.

Health Literacy

- X Parker, et al., *The test of functional health literacy in adults*
- X Davis, et al., *Rapid Estimate of Adult Literacy in Medicine*
- X Williams et al. *Inadequate functional health literacy among patients at two public hospitals*
- X AMA White Paper

Materials Assessment and Health Materials

Assessments [note web site listing for key tools]

- X Doak, Doak and Root, Teaching Patients with Low Literacy Skills
- X Plimpton and Root, *Materials and strategies that work in low literacy health communication*
- X Szudy and Arroyo, The Right to Understand
- X Mosenthal and Kirsch, *A new Measure for assessing document complexity*

Review/Study example

- X Rudd et al, *Health and Literacy: A Review of Medical and Public Health Literature*
- X Davis, et al., *The gap between patient reading comprehension and the readability of patient education materials*

Teaching and Learning

- X Freire, *Adult literacy as cultural action for freedom*
- X Freire, *A dialogue: Culture, language and race*
- X Snow, *The theoretical basis for relationships between language and literacy development*
- X Purcell-Gates, *In Other People's Words*
- X Cook, *Learning theories implicit in medical school lectures*
- X Werner and Bower, *Helping Health Workers Learn*
- X Rudd and Comings, *Learner Developed Materials*

Shame / Empowerment

- X Wallerstein, *Powerlessness, Empowerment, and Health*
- X Purcell-Gates and Waterman, *Now We Read, We See, We Speak: Portrait of Literacy Development in an Adult Freirean-Based Class*
- X Prakh et al. *Shame and Literacy*
- X Auerbach, *Making meaning, making change*

Health Outcomes

- X Grosse and Auffre, *Literacy and health status in developing countries*
- X LeVine et al. *Schooling and survival*
- X Levine et al. *Maternal literacy & health care in 3 countries*
- X Comings et al, *Nepal Case Study*
- X Dexter, et al, *Maternal schooling & health related language & literacy skills*
- X Pamuk et al. *Health, United States, 1998 Socioeconomic Status & Health Chartbook*
- X Baker et al. *The relationship of patient reading ability to self-reported health and use of health services*
- X Baker et al. *The health care experience of patients with low literacy*

Web Sites: www.hsph.harvard.edu/healthliteracy

Note connections to other health literacy and related web sites

Samples From the Press:

- X Morris, *Translator-Free Investing*
- X Mowat, *Alberta Agriculture saves money with plain language*
- X Wong, *Judge blocks state cutoff of welfare disability aid*
- X Sege, *Demoted T worker battles reading handicap*

*Dr. R.E. Rudd
Department of Health and Social Behavior
Harvard School of Public Health*

X *Crossette, Senegal bans cutting of genitals of girls*