

## HPM 242 Determinants of Health Dr. Zimmerman Final Individual Project – Communication Piece

Creativity is an essential component of public health work. It's also fun. Check out the [song made by the Viet Nam Health Department to limit the spread of the coronavirus](#). And also [the related dance](#). Stories, too, can be highly effective ways to communicate about the determinants of health. And of course, who can forget the [viral data visualization by Hans Rosling](#)?

Creative products like stories, videos and even journal articles serve the dual goals of making information memorable, and making it seem important.

You don't have to be a viral youtube star, but this assignment asks you to give some thought to how you might get there.

You are asked to develop an outline of a creative product that illuminates the determinants of health. You may focus on a single determinant, the interaction of several determinants, or adopt a more conceptual or theoretical lens. Whatever you choose, the assignment asks you to research something new that you'd like to convey about this determinant or framework that might not be known to a wider audience, and then find a way to make it memorable.

### **The content (50% of grade)**

For your determinant, find some angle that wouldn't be obvious even to those in public health if they hadn't taken this course. This is the novel insight that you'd like to convey. State the insight in a couple of sentences. Be sure to indicate what is new or innovative about this insight. How does it go beyond what you might have expected before doing the research for this assignment?



Along with this description, submit at least one citation for the source of your information.

### **The form (50% of grade)**

Begin by choosing your intended medium. It can be a story, a podcast, a speech, a song, a data viz, an animation or even an academic research project. Just be sure to say what it is.

No matter the medium, write about how you would handle each of the following elements.

#### *The Hook.*

Create some kind of reason for the audience to be interested in what you have to say. A great example is the quiz Hans Rosling gives his colleagues at the beginning of [this TED Talk](#).

#### *The Stakes.*

The reader or listener has to care about what you're caring about. Give them some stakes—someone will die or get well, or policy will be re-imagined, or the

#### *Narrative tension*

The key to keeping people's attention is to build tension that people want to see relieved. In stories, this tension takes the form of narrative suspense as in "what will happen?" In music, the melody and chord progression creates harmonic tension that is resolved with the final chord and melody note. In an academic article, the tension is about the primary hypothesis.

The tension is Hans Rosling's [dataset TED talk revolves around the difference between our mindset and his dataset](#). Notice that the tension is not immediately resolved. In this talk, for

example, the first few minutes don't reveal any contradiction—the tension comes not directly from the difference between our mindset and his dataset, but rather around how exactly our mindset as he describes it at the beginning is somehow wrong.

Contrast is essential for sustaining narrative tension. In an academic article, it's there in the difference between the intervention and control groups. Not only in their exposure level, but also in questions about how similar they are in other ways—there has to be a sharp contrast between the differences between these groups in one dimension (the intervention) and their similarity in all other dimensions. In a story it may be the shifting fortunes of the hero—just as she's about to triumph, another obstacle is thrown in her way. In music, contrast is syncopation.

### *Repetition.*

Repetition saves lives.

[Repetition is one of the keys that make pop songs great.](#) But if you think repetition is for pop songs only, check out the first movement of Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony, a veritable study in repetition!

### *Metaphor.*

Our brains require metaphors to understand the world around us, and these metaphors influence our opinions about the world, including about public health. Explain how you would use metaphor to



Along with the description of these elements, submit at least one citation for a source of advice about how to succeed in this medium. See below for some examples.

### **Guidance.**

The assignment is only to map out an outline for such a creative project. You are not obligated to carry it through to fruition.

Don't worry at all about any constraints on this assignment. The length doesn't matter, and neither do the margins, font, and so on. Be playful. If there's something you'd like to try, try it.

And here's an out. If you really don't feel up to doing this assignment, then you're allowed to submit a critique of an existing creative product in public health—a Hans Rosling TED Talk, for example, or an academic article—instead of creating your own. Just be sure to address all of the points in this assignment.

### *Resources*

Any of these resources is valuable no matter which medium you choose.

- Matthew Dicks (2018). *Storyworthy*. New World Library.
- Joseph Romm (2012). *Language Intelligence: Lessons on persuasion from Jesus, Shakespeare, Lincoln, and Lady Gaga*. North Charleston, SC: CreateSpace; 2012.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2010). *A New Way to Talk about the Social Determinants of Health*.  
[www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2010/rwjf63023](http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2010/rwjf63023)

### **Grading.**

Don't be intimidated by the grading. Have fun. It isn't that your professor is so good at these techniques. On the contrary—he wants your insights and creativity and may use them in future classes!

There are 3 deliverables for this project, each of which is graded separately.

The **first deliverable** is to be completed **Sunday, April 12<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm**. Students must submit an idea for the final project that meets the expectations outlined above. Most ideas can probably be adequately expressed in one or two sentences, but if you have more, feel free to hand it in. In addition, each idea should be accompanied by a list of 2 or more resources as described above.

The **second deliverable** is a draft write-up of the idea, due **Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 pm**. This write-up should include details about both the form and the content of the final idea. Again, the second deliverable should include a bibliography of resources for both (a) the substantive part of the content regarding the determinant of health and (b) success in the chosen medium. The assignment will be graded on the basis of the extent to which progress has been made toward a successful final product, and the extent to which the resources for success identified in the medium have been followed.

The **final deliverable** is the final product, which will be shared with the class during the last two sessions, and is accordingly **due by 10 pm on Monday, June 1**.