

# CMNS 3500 - Language and Power: Clarity, Accessibility and Persuasion in Health Messaging

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# Where we're going today

01

Getting your  
attention in a  
crowded linguistic  
marketplace

02

Preparing for in-  
class task

03

Course Evaluation  
Project Work (as  
time permits)

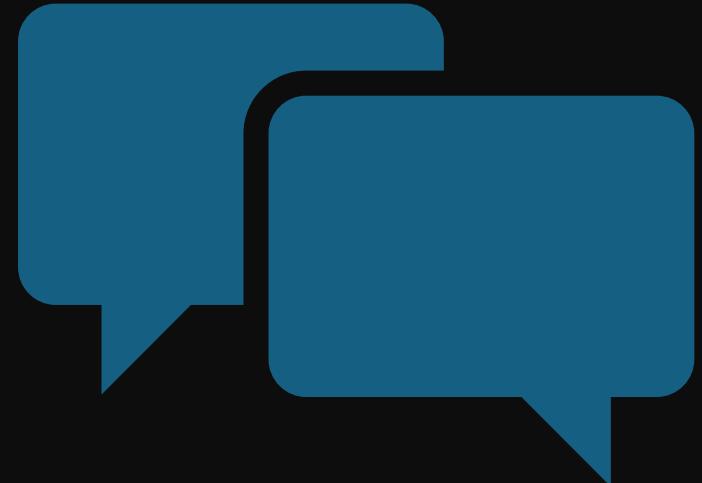


**Nov 26** **Social Media and the language of health: Clickbait, metaphor, sensationalism.**

**Submit Unessay today through Dec. 3 (30%)**

**Dec 3** Final In-class task (15%): Designing ethical health communication: Navigating misinformation, accessibility, and trust

- How language choices shape health messaging on social media
- Linguistic features of
  - clickbait
  - sensationalism
  - metaphors



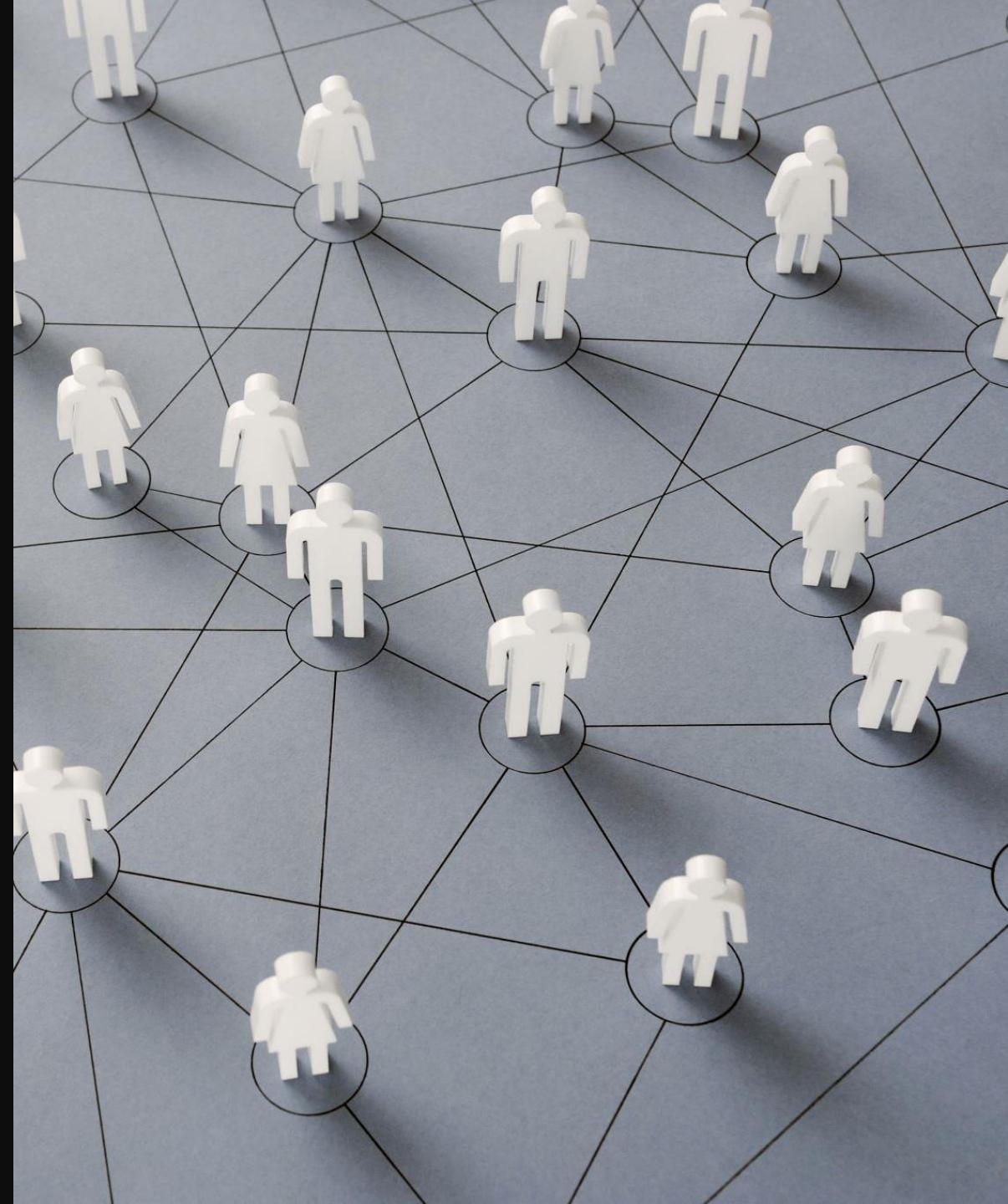
Social Media and the  
language of health

## Social media and health information

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- Increased access
- Democratized information
- Fragmented authority
- Increased spread of information

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**From**

Medical authority

**To**

The “everyman” or “everywoman”

Monologue

Dialogue

Primarily text-based

Multi-modal

Lengthy explanations

Bite-sized content

Scientific/medical jargon

Conversational language

Institutional voice

Personal narrative

# The attention economy



Maël BALLAND on [Unsplash](https://unsplash.com)

This Tim Hortons item has more sugar than 5 donuts - nutritionists are warning   
Canadians

Toronto doctor reveals the supplement Big Pharma doesn't want you to buy

If you're taking this medication, stop immediately and read this



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- Vague Deictic Pronouns
- Superlative and Absolute Language
- Imperative Commands
- Curiosity Gap Construction
- Conspiracy Framing Language

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# COVID-19 Metaphors

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- “navigating uncertainty”
- “tsunami of cases”
- “avalanche”
- “we're not out of the woods yet”
- “drowning healthcare system”
- “flatten the curve”
- “we're all in this together”
- “fighting COVID”
- “long road ahead”

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## Categories

# Metaphors help us conceptualize abstract concepts

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- War
- Container
- Balance
- Journey
- Machine

"Opioid-related deaths in BC increased 5% year-over-year, reaching 1,827 deaths in 2023"

"BC's DEADLY opioid crisis EXPLODES as death toll SOARS to shocking new heights - five people dying EVERY DAY in devastating epidemic"

**"Health Canada recalls Brand X chicken due to possible Listeria contamination"**

**"URGENT: This chicken product could be KILLING Canadian families - check your fridge NOW before it's too late!"**

**"Legal pot to trigger EXPLOSION of teen drug addiction, experts warn"**

**"Cannabis legalization will REVOLUTIONIZE Canadian healthcare and CURE the opioid crisis"**

## Sensationalism – The Linguistic Megaphone

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- Time compression
- Quantifiers
- Catastrophizing
- Loaded language
- Intensifiers and amplifiers

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# Preparing for in-class assignment – December 3

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Once again, you can bring whatever written materials you'd like into the room – electronic devices under chair

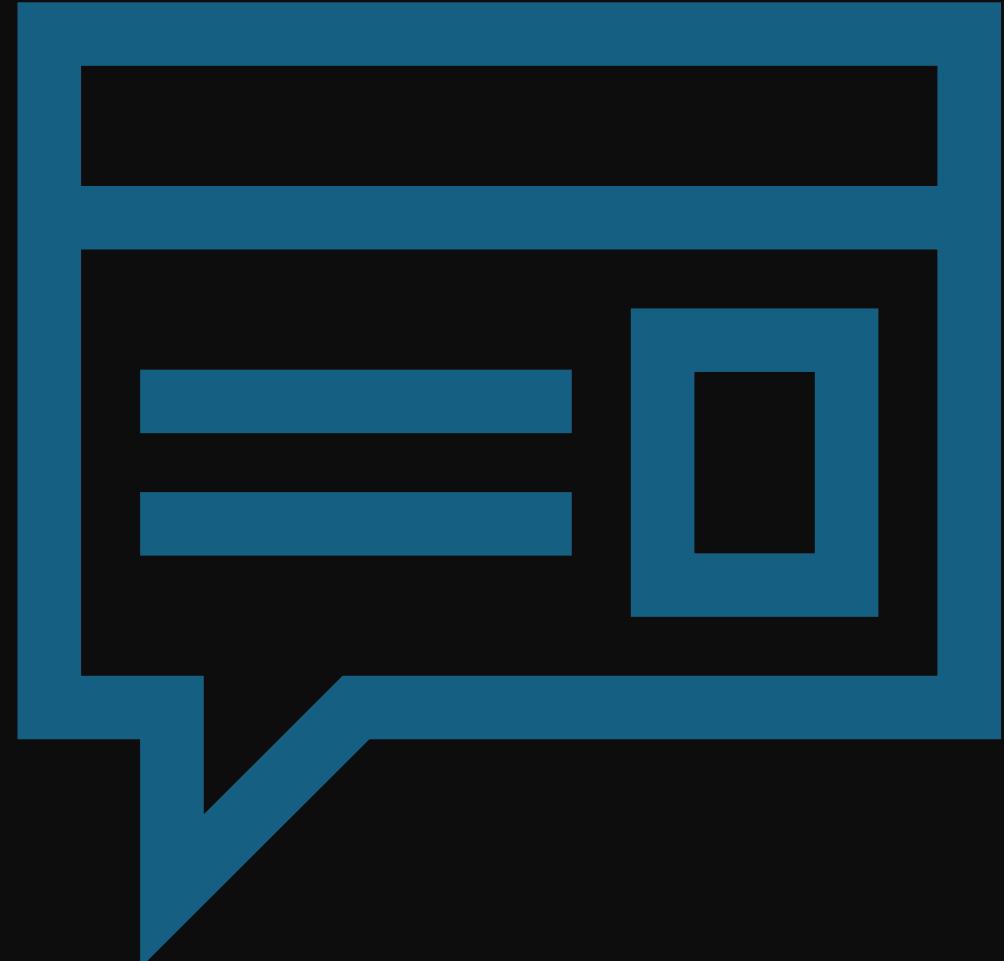
We will begin at 9:00 – you must be in the room by then. One hour exam

We will all reconvene in class at 10:30

To prepare, I suggest you reflect on the following question:

**How Can We  
Communicate Health  
Effectively Without  
Manipulation?**

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# Password for course evaluation

**xn46mj**