

## COMM 3628: CONTEMPORARY PERSUASION THEORY

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### Instructor

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### Office Hours

Friday 11-12 PM  
& By Appointment

### Class Time

9:10-11:00 AM  
Journalism 360

**Please review the  
topic module in  
Carmen before each  
class!**

### COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will introduce you to major concepts and theories of contemporary persuasion, as well as key methodologies used in persuasion research. We will explore the factors that make messages more or less persuasive, and use theories of persuasion to design persuasive messages. You will also gain experience identifying and evaluating messages to persuade audiences to adopt certain beliefs or behaviors.

### EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this course, students will:

- 1) Demonstrate knowledge of most major theories of persuasion.
- 2) Demonstrate skills in assessing the persuasiveness and effectiveness of a communication message, based on persuasion theory and research.
- 3) Apply theories and concepts to develop persuasive campaigns.

### COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

The following is a list of assignments for this course. Updated grade information is always available on Carmen. I use the standard OSU grade percentages and round up when tallying final grades.

### Exams (100 points)

There will be a midterm and final exam in this course. The midterm will be held in class and the final will be held online. You will be tested on information from all aspects of the course (course readings, materials and lectures). To help you prepare, I will provide a study guide and in-class review session. Each exam will be worth 50 points and will include multiple choice and true/false questions.

### Persuasive Message Paper (75 points)

You will write one six page paper where you will be asked to describe a theory from the course and use that theory to analyze a mass or social media attempt at persuasion. You will describe the media attempt fully (including images and materials) and discuss how it illustrates concepts or aspects of the theory you picked. Then, you will be asked to discuss how well the media attempt worked (based on theory) and how it might be improved to become even more persuasive.

### Weapons of Influence Group Proposal Presentation (50 points)

You will be asked to design a persuasion campaign for a non-profit organization of your choosing, using two of Cialdini's "weapons of influence" that you are randomly assigned. Your group picks the organization/issue, as well as the beliefs/behaviors you want to target. You will produce a "mock up" of the campaign and incorporate it into a formal presentation. You will be graded on your campaign as well as your ability to persuade the audience to adopt your ideas. The class will respond to your ideas as board members of the organization. Ten of the 50 points (roughly 20%) will be based on your participation in the group, which I will base on my observations in class and on discussions/meetings.

with your group members. To receive all of your participation points for this assignment, at a bare minimum you should plan to participate in all classes covering the Cialdini material (3/27-4/17).

### **Online Activities & Quizzes (50 points)**

You are expected to come to complete the assigned readings and to participate fully in class discussions and activities. To help you, I will assign several online activities and quizzes over reading material, as well as class activities. Please be sure to check the class module prior to coming to class. Online activities and quizzes will appear in the class modules at least one week ahead of time and are due at class time. You should also plan 1-2 hours to complete readings and online activities each week.

### **Attendance (20 points)**

With certain exceptions (i.e., work days or exam reviews), I will take attendance every class period using Top Hat. Days that attendance will be taken are noted with an “a” on the course schedule. You may miss up to TWO classes without a loss of attendance points. After that, you will lose **FIVE** points for every class (noted with an “a” on the course schedule) that you miss. See course policies below regarding attendance.

## **READINGS**

### **Textbook**

Gass and Seiter (2018). *Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining* (6<sup>th</sup> Edition). New York: Routledge

Cialdini, R. (2008). *Influence: Science and Practice* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition). Boston, MA: Pearson.

### **Additional Required Readings**

Readings are available on Carmen and are noted on the course schedule or in the course modules. These readings are scientific journal articles, designed to provide an applied context for the theories discussed in class.

## **COURSE POLICIES**

### **Attendance & Participation**

Attendance is *critical* in this class and will be taken regularly using Top Hat. Students are responsible for signing in on their own and any attendance or technology issues with the Top Hat system should be addressed by the second week of class. **If you forget to check-in, arrive after the Top Hat Code has been taken down, or leave within the first 30 minutes of class, you may not receive attendance points for that day. I will also turn on the location tracking feature in Top Hat, so you will not receive credit if you log your attendance from a location other than our classroom or if I see you log-on and then leave.** Attendance will be taken every day, except where noted on the syllabus (e.g., exam and review days). If you forget your phone or laptop on a particular day, just let me know and I can mark your attendance in the system.

Everyone in the class will have 2 “vacation days” that can be used in the event that you need to miss a class, for whatever reason -- you not lose attendance points for those two days. **Absences for university-excused absences or for personal/family illnesses or emergencies (with proper documentation) will not count against you, but you must let me know before class or within 48 hours of missing the class.** For activities such as job interviews, a family get-together or vacation,

getting scheduled to work, routine or non-emergency health appointments, you will need to use a vacation day. You also may not use a vacation day to miss an exam or in-class presentation; if you are not there for these assignments you will receive zero points on the assignment.

Each day you miss beyond your two vacation days will result in a loss of 5 attendance points. The records in Top Hat serve as the official attendance record and you may check your attendance online anytime. Occasionally Top Hat doesn't record your attendance, or you forget to sign in. In the event that occurs, please let me know (in class) and I can correct it in the system. However, **Top Hat attendance corrections must be requested within TWO weeks of the date it occurred.**

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### **Make-up Exams and Presentations**

Make-up exams and presentations will be arranged for university-excused or unavoidable circumstances (e.g., deaths, personal/family illness and emergencies) ONLY with prior notification or written verification, within 72 hours of your absence. If you are not present in a class during an exam or presentation, and the absence is not excused, you will not be allowed to make it up. Make-up exams will be taken in the OSU testing center.

### **Late Work Policy**

If you turn in assignments more than a day late I will grade them for full credit in situations where (1) the assignment was late due to an unavoidable circumstance or illness and/or (2) you let me know about your situation within 48 hours of missing the deadline. If you do not turn an assignment in and don't communicate with me within 48 hours of missing the deadline, you will receive zero points on the assignment.

### **Grade Disputes**

Should you have any questions or concerns about assignments or your grade, please stop by office hours or make an appointment to talk with me. I am happy to revisit grades and to discuss my evaluation of your work with you. Be ready to discuss where/why you believe you should have received additional points. I will also set aside class time to review exams with you.

### **Technology Use**

Technology is allowed in this course. I understand the value of having computer access in the classroom, and may even ask you bring a computer on occasion. I do reserve the right to institute a technology policy if your usage becomes problematic or to call on you in class in you are not participating. I may also ask students to "unplug" or put away technology if it is being used for non-class purposes.

### **Plagiarism**

All work in this course is to be individually developed. When grading in Carmen I use Turnitin, which will alert me to potential plagiarism. Plagiarism includes using another person's writing without giving them credit, using large verbatim sections of the work of another person or online source (even a public source) or submitting something you have written for another class. If you unsure, please give credit to your source or talk to me about it. Students who plagiarize will be penalized and reported to university officials. You will also receive a grade of zero for the assignment where plagiarism occurred.

## Academic Misconduct

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info\\_for\\_students/csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp)).

## Statement on Diversity

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

## Disability Services

Students with disabilities will be appropriately accommodated. Please inform me as soon as possible of your needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/>.

## Please Take Care of Yourself (Mental Health Statement):

As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student’s ability to participate in daily activities. The Ohio State University offers services to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing.

If you are or someone you know is suffering from any of the aforementioned conditions, you can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via the Office of Student Life’s Counseling and Consultation Service (CCS) by visiting [ccs.osu.edu](http://ccs.osu.edu) or calling 614--292--5766. CCS is located on the 4th Floor of the Younkin Success Center and 10th Floor of Lincoln Tower. You can reach an on-call counselor when CCS is closed at 614-292-5766.

If you are thinking of harming yourself or need a safe, non-judgmental place to talk, or if you are worried about someone else and need advice about what to do, 24 hour emergency help is also available through the Suicide Prevention Hotline (Columbus: 614-221-5445 / National: 800-273-8255); or text (4hope to 741741); or at [suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## Stop by my office anytime!

My office is in 3149 Derby Hall (3rd floor). I am generally in my office M/W/F and my door is usually open (if not, just knock!). Stop by anytime to chat about this course or anything else, or drop me an email and we’ll figure out a time to meet. I’m here to help, so please reach out if you need anything!

**CLASS TOPIC SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
1	1/10	Course Introduction	
2	1/17 <sup>a</sup>	What is persuasion?	G&S 1 & 2
3	1/24 <sup>a</sup>	Influencing Attitudes & Beliefs (TPB)	G&S 3
4	1/31 <sup>a</sup>	Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT) Source & Receiver Factors (SJT)	Storch & Storch (2003) G&S 4 & 5
5	2/7 <sup>a</sup>	Ethics of Persuasion (Online Class)	Watch "Thank you for Smoking" Baker & Martinson (2001) G&S 13
6	2/14 <sup>a</sup>	Message Processing Theory (ELM) Message Factors Impacting Persuasion	O'Keefe (2016), p. 148-153 G&S 9-11
7	2/21 <sup>a</sup>	Message Factors Continued Emotions & Persuasion Theory (EPPM)	G&S 13
8	2/28	Paper Workshop Midterm Review	
9	3/6	Midterm Exam	
10	3/13	<b>Spring Break – No Class</b>	
11	3/20 <sup>a</sup>	Narratives & Narrative Resistance Interpersonal Influence	G&S 6
12	3/27 <sup>a</sup>	Introduction to Weapons of Influence, Reciprocity & Commitment/Consistency	Paper Due 3/26 (Thursday) Cialdini Chapter 1, 2 & 3
13	4/3 <sup>a</sup>	Social Proof, Liking, Authority & Scarcity	Cialdini Chapter 4-7
14	4/10 <sup>a</sup>	Weapons of Influence Work Day	
15	4/17 <sup>a</sup>	Group Presentations & Exam Review	Presentation Slides Due In Class
FINAL	4/18-21	<b>Online Final Exam</b>	