

# COMM 3628: CONTEMPORARY PERSUASION THEORY

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## Instructor

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## Office Hours

12-12:40 PM (W)  
*see link on carmen*  
& by appointment

## Class Time

9:10-11:00 AM  
Ohio Union 3145

## COURSE OVERVIEW

This course will introduce you to major concepts and theories of contemporary persuasion, as well as key methods used in persuasion research. You will explore the factors that make messages more or less persuasive and use theories of persuasion to design effective 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 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 key theories and concepts in the development of persuasive campaign messages.

## 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.

Class modules will be rolled out over the semester. Allow 1-2 hours to view lectures and complete readings and activities prior to class. This course is hybrid; this means that two of the three course hours are completed synchronously online or in-person, and one hour is online only. *Activities posted in the module are due by class time, unless noted.*

### Exam (75 points)

There will be one online exam in this course. You will be tested on information from all aspects of the course, but primarily from lectures. To help you prepare, I will provide a study guide. The timed exam will include multiple choice and true/false questions. You will be allowed to use books and/or written and printed notes when taking the exams, but no online or electronic information. You will be given a window of time in which to take the exams online. I will utilize proctorio to proctor this exam, so you will need a webcam to take the exam.

### Persuasive Message Paper (75 points)

You will write one 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.

### Influence Strategy 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. You will pick 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 power point slide deck for the organization. You will be asked to present and share your ideas on the last day of class.

### **Online Writing Activities & Quizzes (80 points)**

Due to the online nature of this course, you will be asked to complete 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 writing activities and quizzes (open book) will appear in the class modules at least one week in advance and are due at class time. You should plan 1-2 hours to complete readings and online activities each week.

### **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 are posted on Carmen. Readings are scientific journal articles and book chapters that are designed to provide an applied context for the theories and concepts discussed in class. These readings are noted on the syllabus and in Carmen.

You will also need to have a webcam for taking exams in Carmen.

### **COURSE POLICIES**

#### **Make-up Exams**

Make-up exams will be arranged for university-excused or unavoidable circumstances (e.g., personal/family illness and emergencies) with prior notification or if you let me know within 48 hours of missing the deadline. Make-up exams must be completed within one-week of their originally scheduled date, if possible.

#### **Late Work Policy**

All assignments are due by the date posted on Carmen.

I will grade late assignments for full credit if you (a) let me know beforehand your assignment will be late or (b) get in touch with me after missing a deadline (preferably within 48 hours). I am willing to offer you some flexibility, given the current situation with COVID-19, as long you communicate with me regarding your situation. However, if you do not communicate with me and you do not complete assignments within TWO weeks of their due date, you will receive a zero on that assignment. I will not grade late assignments past the last day of class.

#### **Grade Disputes**

I am always happy to revisit grades and discuss my evaluation of your work. Send me an email to set up a time to chat about your grade. Please be ready to discuss where and why you believe you should

have received additional points on assignment and how many points you should have received.

### **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 are 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)).

### **Disability Services**

The university strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. In light of the current pandemic, students seeking to request COVID-related accommodations may do so through the university's [request process](#), managed by Student Life Disability Services. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic, or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

### **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.

### **Mental Health**

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](https://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](https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org).

## **COVID-19 AND ILLNESS POLICIES**

### **Health and Safety Requirements**

All students, faculty and staff are required to comply with and stay up to date on all university safety and health guidance (<https://safeandhealthy.osu.edu>), which includes following university mask policies and maintaining a safe physical distance at all times. Non-compliance will be warned first and disciplinary actions will be taken for repeated offenses.

### **Student Illness or Absence**

In the event you must quarantine because of exposure to someone diagnosed with COVID-19 OR you are feeling ill with COVID-19 symptoms, you will still be able to make progress in this class!

The quarantine plan for this course is that all lectures (including in-person lectures) will be delivered live via Zoom, as well as recorded and posted to Carmen. I will also post lecture notes. Although you don't have to attend any class live, you are strongly encouraged to do so. Additionally, there are still assignments due each week.

If you are too ill to participate in this course due to COVID-19 or another illness, please contact me as soon as you are able prior to the next class meeting. All materials will be made available on Carmen, including lecture recordings and slides. Alternate assignments or extensions may also be arranged.

### **Instructor Illness or Absence**

If the *instructor* is quarantined or is experiencing respiratory symptoms but is well enough to teach, the in-person sessions will be moved totally online to Zoom. You will be notified via email of this change the night before class.

If the *instructor* is too ill to teach the course for a period of time, the designated backup for this course will step in. You will be notified of any changes via email from me or the School of Communication.

### **Campus Closure**

Should the Ohio State University Main Campus move to full online instruction due to closure, our in-person classes will be moved exclusively to Zoom.

**CLASS TOPIC SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENT DUE DATES**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment</b>
1	1/15 [online]	Course Introduction	
2	1/22 <sup>w</sup> [online]	What is persuasion?	G&S Chapters 1 & 2
3	1/29 <sup>w(2),q</sup> [in person]	Understanding Beliefs, Attitude, Behaviors Cognitive Dissonance Theory	G&S Chapter 3 Storch & Stroch (2003)
4	2/5 <sup>q</sup> [online]	Source & Receiver Factors	G&S Chapters 4 & 5
5	2/12 <sup>q</sup> [in person]	Message Processing Emotions & Persuasion Theory (EPPM)	O'Keefe (2016), p. 148-153 G&S Chapter 13
6	2/19 <sup>q</sup> [online]	Narrative Persuasion Interpersonal Influence on Persuasion	G&S Chapter 6 G&S Chapter 14 Additional Readings in Module
7	2/26 <sup>a</sup> [online]	Message Factors 1	G&S Chapters 9-11
8	3/5 <sup>a</sup> [in person]	Message Factors 2 Paper Workshop 1 [online]	G&S 9-11 (Finish)
9	3/12 [online]	Exam	
10	3/19 <sup>a(2)</sup> [online]	Ethics of Persuasion	Watch "Thank you for Smoking" Baker & Martinson (2001) G&S 12
11	3/26 <sup>a</sup> [in-person]	Introduction to Cialdini Book Paper Workshop 2 [online/In-person]	Cialdini Chapter 1
12	4/2	<b>No Class – Break</b>	<b>Paper Due 4/5</b>
13	4/9 <sup>q</sup> [online]	Reciprocity, Commitment/Consistency, & Social Proof	Cialdini Chapters 2-4
14	4/16 <sup>q</sup> [online]	Liking, Authority & Scarcity	Cialdini Chapters 5-7
15	4/23 [online]	Course Wrap-Up & Presentations	<b>Influence Pres. Due 4/23</b>

<sup>a</sup> online activity, <sup>q</sup> online quiz. Please note this is a tentative schedule, it is subject to change.