

COMM 5800 Persuasion & Social Change Syllabus

INSTRUCTOR:

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Do NOT use any email for me that appears to be an APSU email address. I don't have this address and your message will not reach me.

Course Goals

The primary goal of this course is to examine the major social science theoretical perspectives and concepts related to persuasion (i.e., communication designed to create, change, or reinforce attitudes and/or behaviors). This course will familiarize you with major theories, areas of research, and points of controversy in the social scientific study of persuasion. In addition, the course will provide a depth of knowledge and expertise in compliance gaining strategies. I do not assume that you have any previous persuasion or related course work. A course in statistics and/or research methods, however, may help you sometimes in understanding course material.

The primary focus of this course will be on real world applications of the theories, approaches, and strategies we will learn. Theory is not valuable unless we can use it to explain and predict things in the 'real world.'

Thus, you will notice (below), that this course will have 2 application papers (explained separately on the course website) that require you to locate some attempt at persuasion (for example, an advertisement or campaign speech) and evaluate it using one of the theories/strategies we will cover in class.

Here are some specific objectives that I think will keep us (mostly me) focused:

- I will introduce you to theories and research of social influence and persuasion.
- We will examine how compliance professionals use various compliance techniques (reciprocity, consistency, scarcity, etc.).
- We will examine why those techniques are so successful.
- You will be able to recognize and benefit from those techniques.
- We will examine some ethical questions regarding persuasion and influence.
- You will gain valuable experience interpreting social science articles.

Requirements and Grading

There are three components to your grade this semester. They break out as follows:

Discussion/Participation =	25%
Application Paper 1 =	15%
Application Paper 2 =	20%
Final Group Paper =	20%
Final Exam =	20%

Check the documents on the application paper and group paper for more detailed explanation of those assignments. Meanwhile, you are required to read assignments each week and then answer questions about those readings. You will post your answers on the discussion board for that week. You must answer by the answer deadline and you are also required to respond to at least 2 other students by a response deadline. I grade both on the quantity (i.e. did you respond 2 times for each unit in a meaningful fashion) and quality of your posts (i.e. did what you write make sense?).

Required Readings/Textbook

Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion, by Robert Cialdini

The Cialdini textbook will constitute approximately half of your reading load for this course. This is an awesome book and it ought to be required reading for everybody who will buy a car or practice/be subjected to any type of persuasive campaign.

When we are not covering the Cialdini textbook, we will have some separate readings. Readings will be posted on the course website in advance of the unit. Please note that what is posted will change from time to time. In other words, I might find an interesting study during the course and add it to your readings. I assume that you will have completed the reading assignments ahead of time.

COMMUNICATION 5800 Spring 2008
TENTATIVE SEMESTER SCHEDULE

March 11th note: I am writing this in the Dallas Airport and don't have the Cialdini book with me---I am guessing on the chapter numbers. If the chapter numbers are incorrect, I will make corrections the evening of March 12th/morning of March 13th.

<u>WEEK/DATES</u>	<u>TOPIC(S)</u>	<u>READINGS</u>
1a March 12 - 13	Introduction to the Course	----
1b March 13 – 14	What is Persuasion?	Cialdiini Ch. 1
2 March 15 - 21	Weapons of Influence Reciprocity	Cialdini Ch. 2
3. March 22 – 28	Commitment & Consistency Cognitive Dissonance/Self Perception <i>***Application Paper 1 Due March 23th, 10pm CDT</i>	Cialdini Ch. 3 Unit Readings
4. March 29 – April 4	Social Judgment/Proof Social Judgment Theory Fear Arousal Inoculation	Cialdini 4 Unit Readings
5 April 5 –11	Liking & Authority Spiral of Silence	Cialdini 5 & 6 Unit Readings
6 April 12 – 18	Scarcity Elaboration Likelihood & Other Approaches <i>***Application Paper 2 Due April 13th, 10pm CDT</i>	Cialdini 7 Unit Readings
7 April 19 – 25	Subliminal Persuasion, Cults, Ethics	Cialdini 8 Unit Readings

Final Group Project Is Due 10pm, Central Daylight Time on April 27th, 2008
 Final Examination (essay) is Due 10pm, Central Daylight Time on April 30th, 2008