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COMM 241.50: Persuasive Communication

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PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATION
COMM 241
FALL 2012

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Course description: The primary goal of this course is for you to understand the theories, principles, and strategies of social influence as they apply to everyday contexts. You should become familiar with findings from empirical investigations on persuasion, social influence, and compliance gaining. You will also learn and apply strategies and techniques of persuasion relating to a wide variety of real-life situations.

Required reading:

Gass, R.H. & Seiter, J.S. (2011). *Persuasion, Social Influence, and Compliance Gaining* (4th Ed). Pearson Education, Inc. (Books available in the UM bookstore or through the UM bookstore website.)

Readings linked from Moodle may also constitute required reading for this course.

Course objectives:

1. Comprehend, explain, and apply theoretical explanations for the process of persuasion.
2. Understand how research on persuasion is conducted by social scientists.
3. Identify and evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of persuasion attempts in a variety of contexts.
4. Apply your knowledge to real-life situations and become a better (more competent and ethical) participant in your social interactions.

Course format: Our course objectives are met entirely over the internet. This is a good opportunity for you to study and internalize information on your own time and in your own place. By removing many of the constraints of time and location, this course has the potential to fit your unique needs in a way that many traditional courses are not equipped to do. Over the course of this class, you will read the text and outside readings, interpret and analyze these readings through discussion questions and application, visit websites, write papers, observe interactions, and more.

The online format may be new for many of you, and you should expect to take some time to get used to the format beyond the time you spend on your coursework. The UM 101 link may be useful to those who have not used Moodle in the past. It can be found in the top right corner of the page after you log in.

Policies

Deadlines: Although you have a high degree of flexibility in managing your time in a class of this format, deadlines are necessary. To keep you caught up in the course there are deadlines by which each assignment must be completed. Assignments may be completed earlier than the deadline, but anything submitted after the midnight (Montana time) deadline is considered late. Late discussion postings will receive no credit. Late papers may receive a 10% grade deduction PER DAY. Papers turned in after a week will not be graded and will receive no credit. Please also note that the 12:00 deadline holds firm—12:01 is considered late. Please plan to turn in assignments at least a few minutes early so that you do not miss this deadline.

Do your best to turn assignments in early and communicate with me ahead of time any difficulties you foresee in meeting a deadline.

The course schedule shows the topic and reading assignments for each week and the week's deadline. Discussion postings and papers are due at midnight on the last date listed for the week (which will always be a Friday). For example, the week of September 1-7 you should read Chapters 1 and 2 as well as any lecture notes posted. Readings and discussion questions will be posted sometime the Saturday of each week, in this case September 1. You then have the week to read and respond to the discussion questions. In this example, your posting would be due September 7th by midnight. Other assignments are also due the last date of the week listed. Papers are due Sept. 21 and Nov. 16 at midnight. Exams are due Oct. 12 and Dec. 14 by midnight.

Academic integrity: The University of Montana and the Department of Communication Studies strongly believe in academic integrity; thus cheating and plagiarism are not tolerated. Because we are not meeting face to face, we will use the honor system and I expect you to do your own work. You are paying for this class and your degree will reflect that you took the class—therefore I recommend that you take this opportunity to learn the content and do your own work.

See the Student Conduct Code for definitions and consequences of cheating and plagiarism. The Student Conduct Code is located at http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php. Students will be charged with academic dishonesty for any breach of these standards including sharing their work (in any form) with other students, claiming another individual's work as their own, or attempting to thwart the examination process in any way. No work done for credit in any other class may be turned in for credit in this class. The minimum consequence for engaging in cheating or plagiarism is failure on the related assignment, but this type of activity usually results in failure in the entire course. At worst, academic misconduct can result in expulsion from the university.

Technology: Technology sometimes fails. Computers crash, printers run out of ink, Internet connections are interrupted. In order to control for these failures, since the Internet is your only link to the class, you should plan ahead and be prepared. Save your work often and in several places. Leave yourself time before assignments are due to allow for connection errors, and make a back-up plan (friend's house, coffee shop wifi) in case your own technology doesn't work.

The *only* acceptable technology-related excuse for not meeting the requirements and deadlines of this course is a documented failure of Moodle. If you find the system is not working, you'll need to e-mail me immediately to inform me of the time at which you believe the system (not your computer or connection) was at fault. You should then contact the help desk at CIS (Help Desk: 406-243-4357, helpdesk@umontana.edu). You should also continue attempting to access the system. Any failures in the system are usually resolved within an hour. If documented failures of the system occurred when an assignment was due, you will not be docked late points, but it is expected that you will try again to get an assignment in as soon as the system is up again.

Professionalism: Although this is an online class, I expect a high degree of professionalism in your work. Specifically, I am looking for proper grammar, words written out (no texting abbreviations), capitalization (beginning of a sentence, proper nouns), punctuation, etc. Please respect language rules and read through your comments before submitting them. I reserve the right to deduct points for poor language use.

Consideration: The overall atmosphere in the class should be that of respect—for yourself and everyone else in the class. During our interactions, personal information may be disclosed. Please do not repeat this information or use it to harm others. Help foster an atmosphere where a priority for education and a respect for all students are valued by engaging in comments that relate to course content and show tolerance (if not acceptance) for opinions different from your own. Please understand that even in an online environment

harassment of any kind is both inappropriate and intolerable, and disciplinary action will be taken should it occur.

Contesting grades: I am willing to go over an assignment or exam although this is more difficult online. Please wait 24 hours after receiving an assignment before contacting me. When you do contact me, please write out your specific concerns and back your position with evidence (from the book, notes, syllabus, etc.). I will be sure to address your concerns and we can carry on the discussion as needed.

Assignments

Paper 1: Your first paper is a persuasion awareness paper. You will be analyzing two interactions where persuasion occurred in your life, one where you were persuaded and one where you were the persuader.

Paper 2: Your second paper is a health intervention paper. You will be using persuasion to try to change a health practice for a target audience. Specific instructions for both papers are linked in Moodle.

Exams: You will complete two exams. These may consist of timed multiple choice questions as well as short-answer and essay questions. You will not be quizzed on your reading each week, but you will be expected to know terms and concepts from the book for these exams. I will provide a review sheet a week before each exam.

Discussion postings: Each week you will answer a discussion question that will help think about the issues covered in the textbook, apply them, and debate ideas with other class members. Each discussion posting is worth relatively few points on its own, but cumulatively they have a strong effect on your grade for the class. I will post a discussion question or an activity for you to complete and report on each week. Once you have submitted your own response, I encourage you to read and respond to your classmates' postings so that we can all learn from each other's diverse opinions and backgrounds. Discussion postings will be available on the Saturday of each new week and you must respond before midnight the following Friday.

Free Pass: I realize that there are many things that compete for your time during a semester, therefore, you may choose to skip one discussion posting this semester. You can use one free pass which is worth 10 points. It may be used for one discussion posting only. You may not use it for papers or exams. In order to redeem your points, you must post on the discussion board that you are using your free pass for that assignment. I will not automatically give you the points for a missed assignment—you must indicate where you want the points applied.

Grading: Grades are assigned according to the following scale:

A = 90-100%	Outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
B = 80-89%	Significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements
C = 70-79%	Meets the basic course requirements in every respect
D = 60-69%	Worthy of credit, although it does not fully meet the course requirements
F = 0-59%	Fails to meet many of the basic requirements

<u>Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>
Papers (2 total, 1 @ 20 pts., 1 @ 60 pts.)	80
Discussion postings (14 @ 10 pts. each)	140
Exams (2 @ 40 pts. each)	80
Total points	300

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings	Assignments
Aug 27- Aug 31	Introductions, Expectations	Syllabus	DP (Discussion Posting Due)
Sept 1-7	Why Study Persuasion? What Constitutes Persuasion?	Chapter 1 & 2	DP
Sept 8-14	Attitudes and Consistency	Chapter 3	DP
Sept 15-21	Credibility	Chapter 4	DP Paper 1 Due
Sept 22-28	Communicator Characteristics and Persuadability	Chapter 5	DP
Sept 29- Oct 5	Conformity and Influence in Groups	Chapter 6	DP
Oct 6-12	Language and Persuasion	Chapter 7	DP Midterm Exam Due
Oct 13-19	Nonverbal Influence	Chapter 8	DP
Oct 20-26	Structuring and Ordering Messages, Sequential Persuasion	Chapter 9 & 10	DP
Oct 27- Nov 2	Compliance Gaining	Chapter 11	DP
Nov 3-9	Motivational Appeals	Chapter 13	DP
Nov 10-16	Deception	Chapter 12	DP Paper 2 Due
Nov 17-23	THANKSGIVING		
Nov 24-30	Visual Persuasion Esoteric Forms of Persuasion	Chapter 14& 15	DP
Dec 1-7	Ethics	Chapter 16	DP
Dec 14			Final Exam Due