

Spring 2017
CO 4253-SECTION – Elements of Persuasion
Day and time
McComas ROOM NUMBER

INSTRUCTOR:

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Office phone: 662-325-7840

Office hours: Thursdays from 10:45 a.m. to 12:45 pm and by appointment (also available by phone/Skype/Google hangout, if needed)

I prefer to be contacted by email and aim to respond to emails within one to two business days. Please plan accordingly.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Persuasion: Theory and Research (3rd Edition) by Daniel J. O'Keefe

Influence: Science and Practice (5th Edition) by Robert B. Cialdini

There are two required books for this course. We will start with *Influence: Science and Practice* (5th Edition) by Robert B. Cialdini, which offers an approachable (and fascinating) introduction to the many applications of persuasion that we encounter daily. We will then delve into *Persuasion: Theory and Research* (3rd Edition) by Daniel J. O'Keefe, which will provide an opportunity to more deeply examine the science of persuasion. This textbook is a bit dense, but it is written by a scholar that I admire deeply, and I think that by working through it you will be well prepared for a career in communication. It's worth the challenge. Also, please note that the required editions of these textbooks vary dramatically from earlier versions (*Persuasion* hasn't been updated since 2002), so it is imperative that you acquire the correct edition. If you are having trouble affording your textbooks, please talk to me as early as possible so that we can brainstorm solutions together.

OVERVIEW OF COURSE:

CO 4253 Elements of Persuasion: 3 hours.

(Prerequisite: CO 1223). Three hours lecture. A study of the motivation of audiences and techniques of persuasive campaigns and communications.

Course learning outcomes:

1. Students will be able to identify persuasive theories and principles present in real-world persuasive messages.
2. Students will be able to analyze existing persuasive messages to identify intended goals, intended audiences, and incorporation of theory.
3. Students will be able to create a theory-based persuasive message.

Have you ever watched a late-night commercial and found yourself absolutely convinced that you **MUST HAVE** that Snuggie™/PedEgg™/FlexSeal®? Or, on a positive note, maybe you saw a speaker on campus last year who inspired you and convinced you to change the world in a meaningful way. These are examples of persuasion in action. The primary goal of this course is to help you understand how persuasive messages have their effects (for better or for worse). These

messages may come through the media (e.g., print, radio, web, television, social media) or they may be delivered in person (e.g., salespeople, teachers, clergy, friends). Everything we do in this course will be done with this goal and the course learning outcomes in mind. The readings, lectures, and class activities will all be oriented toward helping you understand components of persuasive messages, theories behind how messages have their effects, and how characteristics of the communicator, message, and receiver affect persuasion. This will include a great deal of discussion about real life examples of persuasion. The assignments are also all designed to help you understand how persuasive messages have their effects and to help meet the course learning outcomes:

1. First, you will find real world applications of principles discussed in *Influence: Science and Practice* and applications of persuasive theories discussed in the O’Keefe text (outcome 1).
2. The analysis assignment will involve choosing and dissecting a persuasive message that interests you (outcome 2).
3. Finally, for the final project, you will plan and create an original, theory-driven persuasive message on your topic of choice (outcome 3).

Through the processes of analysis and creation, I hope that you will leave the course with not only a deep understanding of persuasion but also a communication “product” to build your professional portfolio.¹

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS:

An overview of the major course assignments and grading scale follows. When needed, more detailed descriptions of each of these assignments and grading rubrics will be provided via MyCourses and reviewed in class. See the separate “course calendar” document for deadlines.

<p>Total possible points = 850:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities (e.g., informal writing assignments, in-class activities) – 200 • <i>Influence</i> application assignment – 100 • Analysis of persuasive message first draft – 50 • Analysis of persuasive message final – 150 • Developing a persuasive message first draft – 50 • Developing a persuasive message second draft – 50 • Developing a persuasive message final draft – 150 • Presentation for final project – 100 	<p>Grading Scale:</p> <p>A: 90 – 100% = 761 – 850 points B: 80 – 89% = 676 – 760 points C: 70 – 79% = 591 – 675 points D: 60 – 69% = 506 – 590 points F: Below 60% = 505 points and below</p>
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Activities: Throughout the course, there will be multiple opportunities for informal writing that helps develop your thinking about the course content (e.g., reflections on the reading, in-class writing exercises, etc.) You will also be asked to actively participate in in-class peer reviews of your fellow students’ work. Collectively, these assignments will be worth 200 points.

¹ True story: I took Elements of Persuasion from the great Dr. Sid Hill in this very department. The project I completed for that course is the piece of undergraduate work of which I am proudest. The course had such a profound impact on me that I wrote about it in my doctoral program application over five years later, and it’s one of the reasons that I am passionate about teaching Elements of Persuasion. I hope that this course will be just as meaningful for you as it was for me.

***Influence* assignment:** After reading *Influence: Science and Practice* (5th Edition) by Robert B. Cialdini, you will compose a formal email addressed to Dr. Cialdini (approximately 250 words). As in the reader stories featured throughout the book, you will tell Dr. Cialdini about a time when you experienced one of the *Influence* principles (Reciprocation, Commitment and Consistency, Social Proof, Liking, Authority, or Scarcity) in action. Your email should name the principle and include a real world example that clearly demonstrates your understanding of the principle. This assignment will be submitted through MyCourses and should demonstrate proper spelling, grammar, and punctuation. It is worth 100 points.

Analysis of persuasive message: For this assignment, you will choose and analyze a persuasive message. A detailed assignment handout will be uploaded to MyCourses and reviewed in class at a later date. The draft of the analysis assignment will be worth 50 points, and the final assignment will be worth 150 points.

Developing a persuasive message: This project, the final project for the course, will allow you to develop a proposal for a persuasive message on a topic of interest and write a justification of your choices. The first draft of the written assignment is worth 50 points, the second draft is worth 50 points, and the final draft is worth 150 points. You will also present your ideas in class in a five-minute presentation, which will be worth 100 points. A detailed assignment handout will be uploaded to MyCourses and reviewed in class at a later date.

MYCOURSES:

Assignment explanations and other course materials required for successful completion of this course be posted on MyCourses. You will also be required to use MyCourses to submit certain assignments. It is your responsibility to access the information, complete online assignments, and bring required materials to class. Pro tip: Use <https://mycourses.msstate.edu> to access MyCourses directly. ITS tells me that MyCourses is very rarely down, but the connection between MyState and MyCourses can be buggy, so going directly to the MyCourses site will help you avoid issues.

SAFE ASSIGN:

Materials submitted through MyCourses may be scanned by SafeAssign.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES and MISSED / LATE WORK:

We like you, and class is more fun when you're here. This course involves many in-class activities designed to help you complete the course assignments, so there is much to be gained from attending and participating in every class. I will track and report attendance using the university's attendance tracking system. I also expect you to be on time for class, as entering class late can be very disruptive.

As the student, it is your responsibility to let me know when you will have to miss class and to make arrangements to make up any missed assignments. Assignments that are late without a valid excuse (as defined in the MSU attendance policy) may be subject to a reduction of one letter grade for each 24 hour period (or fraction thereof) they are late beyond the deadline.

The MSU policy on attendance is located at <http://www.policies.msstate.edu/policypdfs/1209.pdf>.

HONOR CODE:

The MSU Honor Code (<http://students.msstate.edu/honorcode>) states:

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: <http://honorcode.msstate.edu/policy>.

Multiple Submissions

According to section I.C. of the MSU Honor Code, multiple submission is defined as, *“The submission of substantial portions of the same work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without authorization from the instructor of the class for which the student submits the work.”* Any student found in violation of this or any other part of the honor code will be reported to the Honor Code Council.

For additional information please visit: <http://students.msstate.edu/honorcode>

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES:

Students who need academic accommodations based on a disability should visit the Office of Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, call 662-325-3335, or visit the website at www.sss.msstate.edu. MSU, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, will make every reasonable accommodation for students with special learning needs, including hearing and visual impairments, diagnosed learning disabilities, and other classifications of disability specified in the Act. If you wish to have assistance under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, please contact me as soon as possible.

TITLE IX:

MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU’s educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU’s Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at <http://www.msstate.edu/web/security>, or at <http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/>.