

**Spring 2007**

**PERSUASION  
BACM 30490**

**TH 12:30 to 1:45**

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*The Eugene D. Fanning Center for Business Communication  
College of Business Administration  
University of Notre Dame*

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The instructor for the course is Dr. Sandra Collins. Office: 219 Mendoza College of Business. Office Hours: TH 10:00 to noon, and by appointment. E-mail: scollin1@nd.edu. Business phone: 631-3919. Home phone: 277-1067. Mendoza College of Business fax number: 574-631-5255.

The Director of the Eugene D. Fanning Center for Business Communication is Prof. James S. O'Rourke. The Center is located in 234 College of Business. Telephone: 631-8397. Fax: 631-5255. E-mail: james.s.orourke.2@nd.edu.

## **TEXT**

Coursepack available at LaFortune.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to:

- Define persuasion and other forms of social influence.
- Describe the factors that influence how deeply a persuasive message will be processed and how effective it will be.
- Analyze persuasive messages and identify their persuasive elements for a given audience.
- Create persuasive messages.
- Differentiate between ethical and unethical persuasion.

## GENERAL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- You must complete the assignments described in this syllabus and submit them on the specified dates.
- You must participate fully and actively in our classroom discussions and exercises.
- You must attend class. Your professor will take roll at each meeting session to determine who is present and who is not.

**Exams.** There are two exams for the class. The exams include multiple choice, true or false, short answer, and short essay questions. Exams include material from class and readings.

**Theories in Action Assignment.** Select two of the persuasion theories or concepts below. For each, find an example of a persuasive message that illustrates the theory. The example could be a print ad, a television commercial, a speech, an editorial, etc. Write one page explaining the theory in your own words and describing how the example illustrates the theory. Turn in the page and full description of the example. In lieu of a description, you may turn in an actual copy, a photocopy, or videotape of your example.

Normative social influence

Sequential persuasion

Compliance gaining techniques

Attitude functions

Fear Appeals

Cognitive dissonance

Elaboration likelihood model

Propaganda

**Planning a Campaign Project.** As Herbert Simmons points out in his book, *Persuasion in Society*, the single speech or 30 second commercial rarely leads to significant and enduring change. That is accomplished by organized, sustained attempts at influencing people through a series of messages known as persuasive campaigns.

For this assignment you will work in small groups of 3 to 4, to plan a persuasive campaign. Campaigns take many forms. For this class, they can be:

- Social (e.g., persuading teens not to smoke)
- Commercial (e.g., promoting a product or service through an advertising campaign)
- Public relations (e.g., reshaping attitudes toward an organization after a scandal)

Campaigns for this class must deal with real issues, organizations, products, or services, and be geared toward a particular audience. (Make sure to select an audience with the power to do what you're asking of them.)

**What steps are involved in the campaign project?** Different types of messages are more or less effective with different social groups. For your campaign, you will need to determine the best way to create the desired change in the target audience. To do this, you will need to research your topic, your audience, and relevant previous campaigns and apply what you learn in this class about theories of persuasion. How much research your group needs to do for your campaign depends on your topic, the history of persuasive messages for this topic, and the audience.

Planning a campaign involves numerous steps, including:

*Set campaign goal.* Your goal might be to change a behavior, an attitude, a belief of your target audience, or some combination of these.

*Research the problem and develop a clear problem statement.* You will first need to confirm that some change is needed. (Is there really a problem?) In some cases, the problem may be well known by your audience, however, in most cases you will want to present evidence that clearly shows that a problem exists and change is needed.

*Research previous attempts to create change.* You will want to do some library/internet research to fully understand your topic. It would be helpful to learn about any previous campaigns that have failed to accomplish goals similar to yours, or persuasive tactics that have been successful at creating the sort of change you're attempting. For example, if you want to keep teens from smoking by making them fear the health consequences, you could see if "fear appeals" have been successful at preventing smoking.

*Research the audience and what persuasive tactics work best with them.* You will need to know the target audience's current attitude (or behavior or belief) and what drives it in order to figure out how to change it. For this project, you will need to determine the current situation by developing a questionnaire and collecting responses from your target audience.

You will also want to learn what sort of persuasive techniques work with this audience to create change. Library research on previous campaigns that have targeted the same audience may be able to tell you what persuasive tactics will work with them and which ones won't.

*Formulate a basic strategy.* You will need to explore the theories of persuasion and principles of social influence that you learn about in this class to help you plan a campaign and predict its outcomes. You will be required to explain *why* you think your campaign would be successful and offer theoretical support based on what you have learned in this class.

Use what you learn in class and your own research to choose the appropriate way to "frame" your issue so that it will be most effective with your audience. For example, framing smoking as a health risk may not work well with teens since the health effects of smoking may seem too far in the future to matter. Framing smoking as a social issue

(e.g., your breath will be offensive, you won't be kissable) might be more effective. Then build a communication plan by determining what message you will give your audience and how you will communicate with them. Craft your messages according to your research. Each group must produce a print ad, a radio or T.V. ad, and one other form of persuasive communication of your choice that is designed to target your audience.

**What do we have to turn in?** Each group must complete and submit the following:

*Questionnaire and summary of data.* You will develop an original questionnaire to determine the current position of your target audience on the issue and administer the questionnaire to a minimum of 30 respondents. A copy of the questionnaire and a summary of the raw data collected will be turned in.

*Report.* Each group must submit a report in memo format that contains the sections below.

- Background on the issue, important prior campaigns
- Audience analysis
- Campaign strategy, including communication plan
- Explanation of theoretical support
- Plan for evaluating the success of the campaign

*Communication samples.* Each group must produce and submit the items listed below; however, please note that you are not limited to these in your communication plan. You can include whatever you want in your plan. For example, the DARE program gives kids T-shirts, entertains them on field trips, has police officers visit schools, etc. You can certainly include these sorts of things in your plan, even though you don't have to turn in samples.

Each group must have three communication samples:

- Camera-ready print ad and name of publication where it will be displayed.
- Radio or television ad, submitted on cassette, CD, VHS, or DVD; and the name of the station where it will air.
- One other form of persuasive communication chosen to target the information consumerism of your audience. This could be an article for a magazine, an infomercial, a brochure, a speech, a detailed agenda for a conference, etc.

*Presentation.* Each group will give a 20 minute presentation on their campaign. **You should prepare this presentation as if you were speaking to an audience that will be making funding decisions and will fund either your group or another, depending on how convinced they are that your campaign will be effective.** For example, if your group is promoting a product, the situation might be like an advertising agency competing with other agencies to win the account. Your presentation would be geared toward the representatives of the organization – not the consumers of the product, voters, etc.

*Peer Feedback.* Each member of your group will be required to submit an evaluation of the contribution of every member of the group in the form of a rating from 0 to 5. Evaluations by group members are worth up to five points as part of your participation grade.

## **GRADING AND GRADE WEIGHTS**

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percent of Grade</u>
Campaign Project	30%
Exams (2@25% each)	50%
Theories in Action	10%
Classroom Discussion & Participation	<u>10%</u> 100%

Letter grades are assigned using the following scale:

### Grading Scale

92.5 - 100	A
90-92.4	A-
87.5-89.9	B+
82.5-87.4	B
80-82.4	B-
77.5-79.9	C+
72.5-78.4	C

## **GRADING PHILOSOPHY**

Your grade for any particular assignment in this course is a reflection of your professor's judgment of the quality of your work. We can only grade on the basis of what you give us, not on what you had sincerely intended to do. Submit your work on time, follow the assignment directions, do your own work, and you'll have little trouble achieving the course objectives.

Grades will not be distributed on a curve. You are attempting to meet our standards of quality work. Those standards have been developed over a period of more than 30 years, dealing with business, government, industry, the press and the public. We are asking you to do what your employers will ask of you: prompt, competent, effective work.

Once a grade has been assigned and recorded, it cannot and will not be changed unless evidence is provided that your professor has made an error. A difference of opinion between you and your professor about the quality of your work is not evidence of error.

## **THE ETHICS OF MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION**

Three basic principles guide our discussion of ethics in this course. First, we contend that *all parties in the communication process have ethical responsibilities*. Second, *ethical writers, readers, speakers, and listeners possess attitudes and standards that pervade their character and guide their actions before, during, and after they communicate*. Third, *management communication is not value-neutral*. Your obligation is to communicate for the betterment and benefit of your organization.

## **COURSE POLICIES AND STANDARDS**

Please seek help as soon and as often as you need. Do not wait until it is too late for us to help you. We are here to assist you with the task of learning and improving your communication skills.

**Deadlines.** There are no automatic extensions, make-ups, or incompletes. You will be graded down for failing to meet deadlines. If you cannot meet your responsibilities in the course, see or call your instructor in advance of deadlines. We know that, from time-to-time, everything from a job interview to illness may keep you from attending class. Please let your instructor know *in advance* and he or she will make every effort to accommodate your needs.

**Absence.** We will have just fifteen meeting sessions in this course. We regard your presence as especially important, even if your instructor does not formally take roll at the beginning of each class. If you cannot be here, let your instructor know about it in advance. We have found, over the years, a remarkable correlation: those who come to class faithfully seem to do better in the course.

**Incompletes.** As a rule, we just do not award incompletes. They're genuinely a pain in the neck. You begin the new term with the obligations of the previous semester hanging over your head. Both instructor and student feel harried and unhappy about the situation. In unusual cases, though, such as hospitalization or genuine emergency, an incomplete will be assigned. The student must complete all class assignments within one semester or the Registrar will assign a grade of "F" unless an extension is approved by both the instructor and the Dean, and we notify the Registrar.

**Last Day to Drop or Add.** Because this is a 1.5 credit hour, half-semester class, the drop and add dates are different from other classes.

**Appeals.** Your first course of appeal for any grade, assignment requirement, due date or other course-related decision is your instructor. If you either do not understand or cannot accept your instructor's decision, you may appeal in writing to the course director. Subsequent appeals may be directed to the Associate Dean for MBA Programs and, from there, to the Dean of the College. Keep in mind that most administrators will be reluctant to overrule routine, course-related decisions of their faculty.

**The Notre Dame MBA Honor Code.** Much of the educational process in the Mendoza College of Business involves group discussion and collaborative activities. Neither the College nor the Fanning Center for Business Communication wish to hinder the learning that can and often does take place in that environment. Fairness, however, requires that certain limits be observed in the actual production of assignments.

In the Management Communication curriculum, all writing tasks are to be accomplished by each student working independently. No student should copy another student's work or represent work done by someone else as if it were his or her own. Evidence of plagiarism is cause for serious disciplinary action by the College. Please, do your own work. We strongly endorse and support the principles and process outlined in the *University of Notre Dame Graduate Business Honor Code*. Please read that document and use its precepts as a guide.

## SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

This is a tentative class schedule. Any changes will be announced in class.

(In addition to the assignments below, reading assignments will include brief articles and discussion cases distributed in class or posted on WebCT.)

TUESDAY	THURSDAY
March 20 Introduction to Course Forms of Social Influence Forming Groups for Projects	22 Conformity and Group Influence Read: Coursepack 1, Cerner Case.
27 Compliance and Obedience Read: Coursepack 2.	29 Attitudes and Persuasion Read: Coursepack 3.
April 3 Consider the Audience The ELM Measuring Attitudes Read: Coursepack 5	5 <i>Cialdini's Influence</i>
10 <b>Exam 1</b>	12 Logical Arguments and Evidence Read: Coursepack 10
17 Emotional Appeals Read: Coursepack 6, 7, and 8	19 Stickiness <b>Due: Theory in Action</b>
24 Propaganda Advertising Read: Coursepack 9 and 11	26 <b>Group Presentations</b>
May 1 <b>Exam 2</b>	

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TUESDAY	THURSDAY
January 16 Introduction to Course Forms of Social Influence	18 Forms of Social Influence, Conformity Read: Coursepack 1
23 Compliance Read: Coursepack 2	25 Obedience
30 Attitudes and Persuasion Factors Affecting Attitude Change Read: Coursepack 4	March 1 Factors Affecting Attitude Change, cont. Measuring Attitudes Read: Coursepack 5
February 6	8
13 <b>Exam 1</b>	15 Persuasive Messages/Strong Arguments/Biased Arguments Read: Coursepack 9 <b>Due: Theory in Action</b>
20 Propaganda Read: Coursepack 10	22 Cognitive Dissonance and Motivated Appeals Read: Coursepack 6, 7, 8
27 Persuasion and Advertising Cults and Branding Read: Coursepack 11	March 1 Thanksgiving Break
Ethics and Influence	Exam 2
December 5 Group Presentations	7

## Schedule of Classes

(This schedule may change. Any changes will be announced in class or via email.)

MONDAY	WEDNESDAY	FRIDAY
January 15	17 Introduction to course	19 Defining Persuasion
22 Conformity Read: Coursepack 1	24 Compliance Read: Coursepack 2	26 Obedience
29 Attitudes Read: Chapter 3	31 Attitudes and Persuasion Read: Coursepack 4	February 2 Measuring Attitudes Read: Coursepack 5
5 Cialdini	7 <b>Exam 1</b>	9 Strong Arguments Read: Coursepack 10
12 Propaganda Read: Coursepack 9	14 Motivated Appeals Read: Coursepack 6, 7, 8	16 Motivated Appeals, cont.
19 Critical Analysis of Persuasive Messages <b>Due: Theory in Action</b>	21 Persuasion and Advertising Read: Coursepack 11	23 Ethics and Influence
26 Cults and Branding Article distributed in class.	28 <b>Presentations</b>	March 2 <b>Presentations</b>
5 <b>Exam 2</b>		

