



**COMM 4314.001 • Persuasion • Spring 2013**

**Tuesdays/Thursdays • 2:30 – 3:45 • JO 4.502**

Instructor: Lisa Bell  
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@subcontrary  
Class tag: #COMM4314

Office hours: TR 4:00 – 5:30  
and by appointment  
Office location: JO 3.544  
Office phone: 972.883.2052<sup>1</sup>

**General Course Information**

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**Pre-/Co-requisites**

COMM 4314 carries no pre- or co-requisites, and I do not assume that you bring any formal knowledge of persuasion as you begin the class. However, I do expect you to demonstrate advanced college level writing skills on all assignments.

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**Course Description**

Persuasion lies at the heart of our personal and professional lives, appearing whenever a communicator attempts to change an audience’s knowledge, attitudes, or behavior – whether the goal is to sway a single person, convince a small group in a meeting, influence an entire organization, or win over the public. This course will equip you to be both an effective and ethical practitioner of persuasion and also a critical and savvy consumer of persuasion. Putting the science of persuasion into practice is a complex art that does not lend itself to formulaic recipes. Therefore, this class approaches persuasion primarily through a theoretical lens, asking three main questions:

- How do attitudes work?
- How can we shift attitudes and change behaviors?
- How can we design messages to target these processes?

This theoretical approach allows students to strategize ways to increase their effectiveness as they craft persuasive appeals individually and in groups.

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**Learning Outcomes**

Students who successfully complete COMM 4314 will develop the ability to:

- Understand the dynamics of attitude formation and variables likely to influence attitudes
  - Analyze opportunities for influence and implement effective strategies for building support
  - Create effective persuasive messages that adapt to different audiences, media, and constraints
  - Enhance their credibility using persuasive appeals that adhere to professional and ethical norms
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This course requires one textbook, which you may purchase at the campus bookstore or both off-campus bookstores:

**Richard M. Perloff, *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, 4e.* Routledge, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-415-80568-1**

**Required Text**

You also have the option to rent this textbook, purchase it in the Kindle format, or use the electronic version available at the UT Dallas library. The Kindle and library ebook options use an earlier edition, and I cannot attest to their differences. I can, however, confirm that previous students have used these editions without an apparent negative impact on their final course grade.

You should complete the assigned reading *before* coming to class to benefit from class activities. We will not use class time to reiterate what you can learn from the text – to do so would waste your time and money. Instead, we will use class time to engage the material, which requires you to come prepared.

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<sup>1</sup> Calling me is the *worst* possible way to contact me. You will get a better response if you use email or Twitter.

## Assignments & Academic Calendar

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The following table lists course assignments and their due dates. You can find a more detailed course schedule, including reading assignments and daily class topics, on the course website.

<u>ASSIGNMENT</u>	<u>VALUE</u>	<u>DUE DATE</u>
Exam 1	100	February 7
Exam 2	100	March 7
Exam 3	100	April 2
Exam 4	100	April 23
Persuasive Presentation	100	April 25 – May 2
Critical Analysis Paper	400	May 7
Communication Competency	100	Ongoing
<b>TOTAL POINTS</b>	<b>1000</b>	

- **Exams:** Four in-class exams consisting of four essay questions, typically requiring you to explain how a theory works and either construct a persuasive argument using that theory or explain how it functions in an argument.
- **Persuasive Presentation:** A 5-7 minute speech persuading a specified audience to change behaviors.
- **Critical Analysis Paper (CAP):** A 6-8 page paper where you synthesize the different theoretical perspectives we covered throughout the semester and applied them to a series of related artifacts, such as a single communicator, a movement, an ad campaign, or a debate.

You may consult with the writing center (call 972.883.6707 to schedule an appointment), but don't expect them to copyedit your documents. Similarly, you should not expect (or ask) them to predict what grade your work might receive. They help, but they cannot guarantee results. You bear the responsibility for the work that you submit.

I will assign final grades according to the 2012-14 UTD Undergraduate Catalog scale:

	<b>B+</b>	870-899	<b>C+</b>	770-799	<b>D+</b>	670-699		
<b>A</b>	930-1000	<b>B</b>	830-869	<b>C</b>	730-769	<b>D</b>	630-669	<b>F</b> 0-599
<b>A-</b>	900-929	<b>B-</b>	800-829	<b>C-</b>	700-729	<b>D-</b>	600-629	

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### Course Policies

The following course-specific policies supplement the standard UT Dallas policies that you must know and follow (available at <http://go.utdallas.edu/syllabus-policies>).

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I use a criteria-based rather than norm-based (curved) grading system. Each assignment includes specific criteria, but I generally assess your work according to the resourcefulness with which it:

#### Grading Criteria

- fulfills the criteria established in the assignment specifications,
  - demonstrates an insightful understanding of the practical and theoretical implications of persuasive strategies, and
  - employs rhetorical strategies that develop logical arguments, strong claims, and compelling evidence.
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All work should conform to professional and ethical standards, so proofread and edit all written work that you submit in this class for clarity, mechanics, and style issues.

Professionalism also means that you use appropriate source citation wherever and whenever necessary to enhance credibility and avoid violations of copyright – even if you make those violations inadvertently. In the interest of clarity, you should cite your source not just when you quote directly or paraphrase but also when you replicate the sequence of ideas from a source. You should also cite any source from which you borrow images, tables, charts, screen shots, or other visual information. You should use a standard citation format – whether [APA](#), [Chicago](#), or [MLA](#) – for all reference citations.

You should not submit any work for this course that you developed for another course without first coordinating this approach with me. While you may explore topics across courses, the work you submit for COMM 4314 should be substantially different from the work that you submit in any other course.

Grades reflect the quality of the work product you submit as reflected in the following descriptions.

- A Exceptional** work that demonstrates superior aptitude and initiative in coursework, evidenced by a polished, professional style, insightful analysis, and strong argument development. In other words, you developed an interesting argument that frontloaded strong claims and supported them with compelling evidence that helps the reader gain a new perspective or understanding.
- B High quality** work misses one of the criteria for excellent work while still demonstrating consistently strong qualities in the other two. B-level work may also contain minor problems in understanding or applying concepts that would not appear in an exceptional work product.
- C Acceptable** work meets all assignment requirements but demonstrates weaker use of theoretical concepts or serious flaws that prevents it from satisfying one or more categories. This satisfactory work product meets minimal assignment requirements but does not provide sufficient evidence or fails to implement concepts effectively.
- D Unsatisfactory** work product that does not meet particular assignment requirements and contains significant problems in content, organization, style, or mechanics that distract the audience or interfere with the reception of the message.
- F Unacceptable** work.

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#### **Late Work and Make-up Exams**

*Late, incomplete, or improperly submitted work is unacceptable in this course. I reserve make-up privileges for university-specified circumstances. If you must miss class or deadlines for such reasons, you should make arrangements with me in advance. If you anticipate court appearances (whether as plaintiff or defendant), hurricanes or other cataclysmic acts of God, Facebook crises, red carpet step and repeats, zombie attacks, twenty-first birthdays, Twitter wars, Assassin Creed III's drop date, Woot! Offs, unreasonable bosses, Carly Ray Jepsen calling you (maybe), general loss of mojo, or other calamities whether foreseen or not, start your work early and save it often – ideally in several places. *The Critical Analysis Paper will lose 25% of the possible points for each 24-hour period following the deadline.**

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**Special  
Consideration**

Even if you become my new best friend and you move next door to me so that we may grow old together, I do not curve individual items, nor do I offer “special consideration” to allow students a chance to raise their grade. If a personal situation arises during the semester that may affect your classroom performance, please talk to me sooner rather than later. If you wait until the end of the semester, I won’t be able to help you. I can work with you more easily if you speak to me when the situation arises. I can’t help you if I don’t know you need help.

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Woody Allen might argue that 80% of success is showing up, but simply showing up won’t generate 80% of the possible communication competency points. Your communication competency grade reflects how you attend class, share your ideas, engage your classmates, and behave with respect toward them. Your comments and insights contribute to the class’s success, so you must attend class prepared to discuss material as a public, interactive process. (I plan classes based on the assumption that everyone has carefully and critically read the assigned materials and that you will arrive at class prepared to ask questions to clarify it, discuss it, apply it, and interrogate it.) Everyone benefits when you engage alternative perspectives, challenge interpretations, and invite constructive arguments – so long as you do so with an appreciation for both differences and points of agreement.

This grade explicitly includes civility and professionalism in all course communication and behavior. This civility includes contributing to conversations, respecting others’ opinions, working together in a spirit of cooperation, and actively listening to those who are speaking. Some of the ways you can demonstrate your skills in this area include (but certainly are not limited to):

**Communication  
Competency**

- Keeping the class in the foreground of your attention.
- Showing respect to your peers and to the instructor in your listening and communicating behaviors.
- Participating actively in class rather than simply waiting to be called on.
- Adding value with your contributions to discussion, such as connecting disparate ideas, bringing topical information to the table, and asking insightful questions.
- Focusing on analyzing persuasive strategies rather than “winning” an argument.
- Taking responsibility for the consequences of your choices and actions.
- Engaging class material outside of the classroom – whether by posting to the wiki, tweeting, or visiting office hours.
- Demonstrating a strong work ethic by engaging all ungraded work (such as completing assigned readings, minor homework, and in-class exercises) with a mindfulness and timeliness to reflect a professional approach to the class.

The preceding points frame communication competency in a positive light, but I also note violations of the implied classroom contract even though I may not call you on them.

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**Class  
Attendance**

You should attend class regularly, prepare the assigned readings, and actively participate in class, which is the only way to gain the full impact of the course. Work assigned for this class carries no less priority than work you may have to complete for

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any other class or job. Classroom lectures, discussions, and activities do not generally lend themselves to summary after the fact. Moreover, class participation is a vital part of your learning process. Indeed, studies show that regular class attendance is the single best predictor of academic performance – more so than study habits, study skills, or standardized tests.<sup>2</sup>

You may miss up to two classes for any reason without penalty, but each subsequent absence will decrease your final grade in the course, with excessive absences potentially resulting in failure of the course. Notice that no adjectives modify “absence.” I make no distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences, so you neither need to ask my permission nor provide documentation. I am not interested in excuses – only solutions. Unless you have a disability or other university-specified accommodation, the excellence of your excuse is not a factor; you either attend class or not. If you know this policy conflicts with other commitments you have, please discuss this with me during the first week of classes.

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**Digital Devices**

You may use laptops, tablets, cell phones, and other digital devices so long as you use them responsibly and respectfully. If your digital device disturbs other students or interferes with your ability to participate meaningfully in class activities, you may be asked to remove the distraction and/or leave class, thus losing credit for any of the day’s activities.

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**Niggling  
Details**

- Monitor eLearning regularly for updates and assignments.
- Silence electronic device notification settings before class begins and refrain from accepting calls in class.
- Use your UT Dallas email address when you email me.

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<sup>2</sup> Crede, Marcus; Roch, Sylvia G.; and Kieszczynka, Urszula M. 2010. Class Attendance in College: A meta-analytic review of the relationship of class attendance with grades and student characteristics. *Review of Educational Research* 80: 272-295.

## SPRING 2013 COMM 4314 COURSE SCHEDULE

*Any schedule changes that may become necessary during the term will be posted in eLearning announcements.*

DATE	TOPIC	READ BEFORE CLASS
<b>HOW DO ATTITUDES WORK?</b>		
January 15	Course Introduction	
January 17	Foundations of Persuasion	Chapter 1
January 22	Attitudes: Definition and Structure	Chapter 2
January 24	Attitudes: Definition and Structure	
January 29	Attitudes: Function and Consequences	Chapter 3
January 31	Attitudes: Function and Consequences	
February 5	Exam 1 Review	
February 7	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
<b>HOW DO WE PRESENT PERSUASIVE MESSAGES?</b>		
February 12	Processing Persuasive Communications	Chapter 5
February 14	Processing Persuasive Communications	Heuristics/Biases in Decision Making
February 19	Source Factors: Building Credibility	Chapter 6
February 21	Source Factors: Building Immediacy	Nonverbal Influence
February 26	Message Factors: Structure & Logical Appeals	Chapter 7
February 28	Message Factors: Fear, Guilt, & Emotional Appeals	
March 5	Persuasive Presentations	Delivering a Presentation that Persuades
March 7	<b>EXAM 2</b>	
March 12-14	<i>Spring Break</i>	
March 19	Message Factors: Language and Style	Persuasion and Language
March 21	Message Factors: Language and Style	
March 26	Message Factors: Cultural Premises	Cultural Premises in Communication
March 28	Message Factors: Cultural Premises	
April 2	<b>EXAM 3</b>	
<b>HOW DO WE INCREASE AUDIENCE RECEPTIVITY TO PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS?</b>		
April 4	Personality Factors	Chapter 8
April 9	Receiver Factors	Chapter 9
April 11	Receiver Factors	
April 16	Interpersonal Persuasion	Chapter 10
April 18	Interpersonal Persuasion	
April 23	<b>EXAM 4</b>	
<b>THEORY INTO PRACTICE</b>		
April 25	<b>PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS</b>	
April 30	<b>PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS</b>	
May 2	<b>PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS</b>	
May 7	<b>CRITICAL ANALYSIS PAPER DUE 5:00 PM</b> (No seated final exam)	

