



COMM 4314 • Persuasion • Fall 2013

Monday/Wednesday • 2:30 – 3:45 • ATC 2.602

Monday/Wednesday • 5:30 – 6:45 • ATC 2.918

Lisa Bell

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@subcontrary / #COMM4314

Course wiki: comm4314f13.pbworks.com

Drop-in hours: MW 4:00 – 5:15¹

ATC 1.911

972.883.2052²

Digital engagement: comm4314f13.tumblr.com

General Course Information

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.

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.

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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Required Text

This course requires one textbook, which you may purchase or rent at the campus bookstore or both off-campus bookstores:

Ann Bainbridge Frymier and Marjorie Keeshan Nadler, *Persuasion: Integrating Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3e. Kendall Hunt, 2013. ISBN: 978-1-4652-1791-2

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.

¹ Despite the appearance of my typically-closed office door, I have an open door policy. Unless I have someone in my office or I have my headphones on, come on in. I'll visit with you. You may also schedule an appointment if you want to reserve time to meet with me.

² 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

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	150	October 16
Exam 2	150	December 11
Critical Analysis Paper	400	December 4
Persuasive Presentation	150	Final Exam (TBA)
Digital Engagement	75	Ongoing
Classroom Engagement	75	Ongoing
TOTAL POINTS	1000	

- **Exams:** Two in-class exams consisting of essay questions, typically requiring you to explain how a theory works and either construct a persuasive argument using that theory or explain how the theory functions in an argument.
- **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.
- **Persuasive Presentation:** A 4-5 minute speech persuading a specified audience to change behaviors.
- **Digital Engagement:** Weekly posts to the course Tumblr (comm4314f13.tumblr.com) sharing examples of persuasive concepts that we discuss in class.

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

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>).

Grading Criteria

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:

- 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.

Late Work and Make-up Exams

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 IV's drop date, Woot! Offs, the debilitating shame of buying Miley Cyrus' *Furries* album, unreasonable bosses, 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. I will accept no late submissions for the persuasive presentation.*

**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.

**Classroom
Engagement**

Woody Allen might argue that 80% of success is showing up, but simply showing up won’t generate 80% of the possible classroom engagement points. This 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):

- 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.
- 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.

**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 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.³

What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas. 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 when you need to miss class to attend a pole dancing competition in Vegas (or for any other more mundane reason). Unless you have a disability, religious holy day, 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.

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.

**Niggling
Details**

- 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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³ Crede, Marcus; Roch, Sylvia G.; and Kieszczyńska, 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.

FALL 2014 COMM 4314 COURSE SCHEDULE

Any schedule changes that may become necessary during the term will be posted on the course wiki.

DATE	TOPIC	READ BEFORE CLASS
HOW DO ATTITUDES WORK?		
8.26	Course Introduction	
8.28	Foundations of Persuasion	Chapter 1
9.4	Attitudes: Definition and Structure	Chapter 2
9.9	Attitudes: Function and Consequences	Chapter 3
9.11	Attitudes: Function and Consequences	
HOW DOES PERSUASION AFFECT ATTITUDES?		
9.16	Theory and Persuasion	Chapter 4
9.18	Social Judgment Theory	Chapter 5
9.23	Consistency and Cognitive Dissonance Theory	Chapter 6
9.25	Consistency and Cognitive Dissonance Theory	
9.30	Self-Perception Theory	Chapter 7
10.2	Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behavior	Chapter 8
10.7	Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behavior	
10.9	Elaboration Likelihood Model	Chapter 9
10.14	Elaboration Likelihood Model / Exam Review	
10.16	EXAM 1	
HOW DO WE INCREASE AUDIENCE RECEPTIVITY TO PERSUASIVE ARGUMENTS?		
10.21	Source Factors: Credibility	Chapter 10
10.23	Source Factors: Immediacy	
10.28	Message Factors: Content	Chapter 11
10.30	Message Factors: Content	
11.4	Message Factors: Style	
11.6	Persuasive Presentations	Wiki Reading
11.11	Message Factors: Cultural Premises	
11.13	Message Factors: Cultural Premises	
11.18	Message Factors: Content and Strategies	Chapter 12
11.20	Message Factors: Content and Strategies	
12.2	Receiver and Channel Factors	Chapter 13
12.4	Receiver and Channel Factors	CAP DUE
12.9	Review Day	
12.11	EXAM 2	
THEORY INTO PRACTICE		
FINAL	PERSUASIVE PRESENTATIONS	