COMM 327 – Persuasion
Syllabus for Online Course in Spring 2021

Contents

Instructor Contact Information

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Course Description

"A study of motivational appeals and approaches to creating and evaluating persuasive messages. Emphasis will be on applying theory by both analyzing examples and creating appeals for new circumstances."

Special Note
COMM 327 is offered spring semester, even years. COMM 211 is a prerequisite for this course.

Required Materials

O'Keefe, D. J. (2015). *Persuasion: Theory and research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Technical Requirements
1. *Internet access with adequate bandwidth for viewing videos as well as uploading and downloading documents.*
2. *Installation and ability to use Microsoft Office programs: Word, Excel and PowerPoint.*
3. *Recording device for presentations (e.g., a smartphone).*

Recommended Materials
American Psychological Association. (2010). Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th ed.). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association

Course Outcomes

Students completing this course successfully will be able to
1. Distinguish between persuasion, other types of influence such as education and coercion and sub-types of persuasion such as propaganda.
2. Apply social scientific theories of persuasion in the creation of persuasive messages by evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of such social scientific theories for a given audience, goal, and context.
3. Create and evaluate persuasive messages using a variety of persuasive techniques and be able to explain the reasons for choosing particular techniques over others.
4. Work effectively in collaboration with others to complete both in-class and out-of-class activities.
5. Students will develop a repertoire of communication skills in order to be an effective and ethical communicator across contexts.
6. Students will develop well-reasoned arguments both orally and in writing.
7. Demonstrate competency in written and oral communication, and information literacy.
8. Illustrate competencies needed to function in an entry-level social science-related career and/or graduate education.

Nature of this course:

The activities in this course include textbook readings and mini tests, application papers, and a semester-long project on a persuasive topic. I will include PowerPoints with each chapter. In the notes section of my PowerPoints, you might find supplemental information including actual notes and videos that will help drive the points home. When faced with a concept you do not understand, make your first step identifying all that you do know about the problem. Identify resources that can help you fill the gaps in your understanding. These will include your text, your classmates, online academic support resources and your instructor. Many times as you try to put your understanding into writing, the light will dawn.

Organization of Course*:*

The organization of this course is in modules. Each module has its own set of modular outcomes. Each module is located in a separate folder in the Content section of the course. To begin the course, go to the Content section at the left of the course home page. **Click on the Start Here folder***. This first folder sets the stage for the class and must be finished by end-of-day (11:59 PM) on the second day. Specific due dates for all remaining activities are specified within the instructions and also noted on the calendar for the course.*

Module	Dates to Complete	Topics	Assignments Due
Start Here!	Jan. 25- 26	**Introduction to the course & the people in it**	**SMT** **DB**
1	Jan. 25- 30	**APA Intro and/or Review**	**MT**
2	Jan. 31- Feb. 6	**Ch. 1: Persuasion, Attitudes, and Actions**	**DB | MT**
3	Feb. 7- 13	**Ch. 2: Social Judgment Theory**	**DB | MT**
4	Feb. 14- 20	**Ch. 3: Functional Approaches to Attitude**	**DB | MT** **AP 1**
5	Feb. 21- 27	**Ch. 4: Belief-Based Models of Attitude**	**DB | MT** **FP 1 & 2**
6	Feb. 28- Mar. 6	**Ch. 5: Cognitive Dissonance Theory**	**DB | MT**
7	Mar. 7- 13	**Ch. 6: Reasoned Action Theory**	**DB | MT** **AP 2**
8	Mar. 14- 20	**Ch. 7: Stage Models** *Friday, Mar. 19: Last day to withdraw from full-semester class*	**DB | MT**
9	Mar. 21- 27	**Ch. 8: Elaboration Likelihood Model**	**DB | MT** **FP 3**
10	Mar. 28- Apr. 3	**Ch. 9: The Study of Persuasive Effects**	**DB | MT**
11	Apr. 4- 10	**Ch. 10: Communicator Factors**	**DB | MT** **AP 3**
12	Apr. 11- 17	**Ch. 11: Message Factors**	**DB | MT**
13	Apr. 18- 24	**Ch. 12: Receiver Factors**	**DB | MT** **FP 4**
14	Apr. 25- May 1	**Project presentation**	
15	Finals	• **Last day of classes: Saturday, May 1** • **Reading Day: Sunday, May 2** • **Final project due Wednesday, May 5**	**FP** **EVAL**

Assignment Descriptions

With the exception of the mini-tests and discussion posts, all assignments must be submitted as a Word document. Assignments submitted in any other format will not be graded (because I cannot open them), and will adhere to the late assignment policy. I'm looking at you, Mac users.

Mini Tests:

The mini tests will be based on the assigned readings and PowerPoints that correspond with the chapters. There will be one (1) mini test per chapter meaning there are a **total of 14 mini tests**. These are due by Saturday at 11:59 pm of each module. I am not looking over your shoulder to determine if you are using your learning materials when you take your quizzes. The retrieval of information is what makes learning stick in the long term. Simply looking up, rereading notes, copying down definitions are all activities students do thinking that they are studying effectively. The key to helping yourself truly learn the material requires quizzing yourself—asking yourself to retrieve the information rather than taking the shortcut and looking it up. In other words, use the mini tests to determine areas in need of further effort. LOOK BACK AT THE ANSWERS TO SEE WHAT YOU MISSED.

Discussion Board Guidelines:

Discussions are an important part of this course. For each discussion, you will be required to read the scholarly journal article of the week then discuss. The goal of this assignment is to help you organize your thoughts surrounding the topic and to help me to identify questions and issues that are of interest to the class. When writing your posts think about something you found interesting, confusing, disturbing – as long as you focus on the topic in a scholarly manner. When writing, focus on one of the following as a way to organize your posts and make them substantive:

> a. *Major takeaways*: Between the article and the chapter, what do you see as a major theme that you would like to discuss?
>
> b. *Contradictions.* Between the article and the chapter, do you see contradictory claims or contradictory elements that you see worthy of discussion? If so, explain the contradiction you wish to discuss.
>
> c. *Critical reflections.* Are their methodological or theoretical issues you would like us to discuss because you'd like to understand something better? Or are there theoretical or methodological decisions made by an author that you take issues with? Explain to us (as best you can, sometimes you just have to say "I don't understand X." Are there conceptual issues that need unpacking? If so, explain.
>
> d. *That is interesting!* Perhaps a reading sparked your interest in a topic and/or in a possible class paper topic. If you are interested or disturbed by a reading, think about writing a post that would help us discuss what you find interesting/disturbing.

Responding: You must respond to at least **two** classmates. To respond, you might offer your opinion on the question or comment they've proposed, build off of their question, or propose your own question based off their post. **In order to earn credit for responses, you <u>must</u> contribute an original thought.**

Due Dates: Original posts are due each Wednesday by 11:59 pm. Responses to posts are due each Friday by 11:59 pm. After the due date for the initial blog post, there is a 48 hour period for responses. These dates are noted on the Blackboard calendar. My aim is to provide enough flexibility in the calendar to allow for your various schedules. At the same time, we have to keep up a certain pace to make certain that we work methodically through the assignments and avoid a pile-up of assignments at the end of the course.

Discussion Board Etiquette:
How you post a message to a topic is just as important as what you post. If your behavior does not follow the course etiquette standards stated below, the grade you receive for a posting may suffer.

- The instructor reserves the right to remove any discussion messages that display inappropriate language or content. Do not use offensive language.
- Rudeness or slamming will not be tolerated.
- Show respect for your fellow students, even if you disagree with something that was stated.
- Clearly state what you believe, even if it means that you're disagreeing with someone. Never, however, respond in anger – take care to discuss ideas, not the person.

Grading:
Topic discussion posts will be graded during the week following the date that the discussions are due. Twenty (20) total points are possible for each discussion topic. You will post 1 original post and respond to at least 2 classmate's posts each week. In determining your grade, the following components are considered (see the *Grading Rubric for Discussions* at the end of the syllabus for a complete breakdown): critical analysis, relevance to post, contribution to learning community, quality of writing, timeliness.

To review your rubric once a grade has been entered, click "Tools" in the left column of the class page. Scroll down to "My Grades" (everything is in alphabetical order). Next, find the assignment you're interested in viewing, then click "View Rubric."

Analysis Papers- Theory in Action:

There are three (3) analysis papers which are designed to APPLY concepts from theory and class to daily forms of persuasion. Analysis papers should be 2-4 pages in APA format (title & reference page, double spaced, Times New Roman 1" margins, etc.). ALL papers must be submitted on Blackboard by 11:59 PM on the due date. The description for each analysis paper is available on Blackboard.

The persuasion theories we cover in class are embodied in many persuasive messages that surround us daily. This opportunity offers you the chance to find one example of these theories being applied and to explain how the theory operates within the sample message.

Specifically:
- Find an example (commercial, newspaper article, PR statements, cartoons, internet messages, direct mail, editorials, skits, etc.) of persuasion that illustrates the specified persuasive theory from class.
- Provide a brief overview of theory- 25% of page length
- Write a paragraph or two explaining describing the message. Attach the message or provide hyperlink at the end of the paper if possible (e.g. a print advertisement). **10% of page length**
- Discuss how the theory is utilized and operates in the sample message. **65% of page length**

Final Project

This project will be developed throughout the semester with each assignment building on the last.
1. **Pick a topic of interest to you for which you can create some type of persuasive message for a specific analyzed audience.** For some, it may be easier to pick an audience to which you want to target, and then decide what topic you would like your message to be (e.g. Someday you would like to work with the elderly. You decide your project is going to, generally, have elderly people as the target audience, so you decide between creating a message persuading the elderly to get hearing tests and a message persuading the elderly to hire your new cleaning service.) For others, it may be easier to pick a topic you are interested in and then focus in on what audience you want to target (e.g. Someday you'd like to work in government relations. You choose between a message persuading taxpayers to e-file their federal income taxes and a message persuading that your candidate is the best choice for county commissioner.) **AFTER you have chosen your message topic and target audience, choose what channel/format you would like**

to present your persuasive message in—including, but not limited to—posters, brochures, letters, press releases, social media posts, audio, or video. This is an opportunity for you to be as creative as you can be in designing a message and is an excellent opportunity for you to add a high quality piece to your portfolio.

2. **After picking your message topic, target audience, and desired channel, write a summary of these decisions explaining what you intend to do for your final project.** Summaries should be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman, and approximately ¾ to 1 ½ pages long. (**25 points**)

3. **Select a theory that is (a) of interest to you, and (b) appropriate for your chosen message topic and target audience.** Revise your previous summary as necessary and add a description of your chosen theory to the paper. This time, include very clear goals for your persuasive message and justify why your chosen theory is appropriate (and thus you believe will be effective) for accomplishing these goals (approximately 2-4 pages) (**35 points**)

4. **Design and create your message.** That means that you will make your poster or brochure, write your letter or press release, write and record your audio or video. Remember this should be professional! (**40 points**)

5. **During the last week of class, students will deliver a 6-8 minute presentation of their chosen final project.** The purpose of this assignment is to provide an opportunity to practice presentation skills, share individual persuasion projects with the class, and get feedback from classmates before you turn in your paper. This is a relatively brief summary of the final paper; you are not expected to include every piece of information that appears in the paper. You should, however, be sure to describe your target audience, your intended goals, a brief overview of the actual message you created, your chosen theoretical basis and how you employed it and a brief summary of whether or not (and why) you believe your would be successful in achieving your goals. (**40 points**)

6. **Write your project analysis paper.** In this paper you will critically analyze your persuasive by identifying and justifying your choice of:
   - The goals you seek/sought to achieve by communicating this message.
   - The communication context for your message (e.g. face-to-face, mass mediated).
   - The theoretical basis of your message (i.e., What theory is employed? What are you trying to do by using this theory? E.g., Are you trying to create and resolve dissonance? Attempting to facilitate central or peripheral processing? Attempting to utilize condition? Or another theoretical basis?) For this section you need to focus on the theory you chose, how you attempted to employ it in your message, and then compare and contrast it to the potential appropriateness and effectiveness of a theory you did not choose. Be sure to identify how another theory would have been employed and why it would or would not have been better than the one you chose.
   - The appropriateness and composition of your message (e.g. visual composition, language, use of appeals, etc.)
   - How ethical your message is.

   Your evaluation in this paper should include support for the choices you made and the justification for alternatives you did not select. **The paper should be approximately 10-12 pages in length (standard fonts, spacing, and margins) and should include an introduction and conclusion.** Title page and references do <u>not</u> count toward the page number. (**100 points**)

Course Assessments

	Points Per Assignment	Number of Assignments	Approx. % of Grade	Total Points
Mini-test (including Syllabus MT)	**10**	**14**	**20%**	**140**
Discussion Board	**20**	**12**	**34%**	**240**
Analysis Papers	**30**	**3**	**13%**	**90**
Final Project	**230**	**1**	**33%**	**230**
- Topic summary (P1&2)	25			
- Theory justification (P3)	35			
- Message creation (P4)	40			
- Presentation (P5)	30			
- Paper (P6)	100			
TOTAL				**700**

Above is complete list of all required activities.

Grading Scale

To calculate your grade, divide the number of points you have by the total number of points in the class. Percentages will only be rounded at .50.

Grade Distribution		
A = 93-100%	B- = 80-82%	D+ = 67-69%
A- = 90-92%	C+ = 77-79%	D = 63-66%
B+ = 87-89%	C = 73-76%	D- = 60-62%
B = 83-86%	C- = 70-72%	F = 59% and below

Expectations

Time
While the organization and the actual activities of this course may be different for a session offered during a regular semester, the expected learning outcomes and the time commitment required to meet those outcomes is the same. This is a full semester course being taught completely online. This means that all the time you would normally spend in class meetings. To be successful in this course, you should plan to allot 3-4 hours per week for "in-class" time which does not include reading the textbook or completing assignments. **I strongly recommend setting aside the same one or two time slots each week to treat as your class time in the same location.**

Communication
You are expected to communicate respectfully. Using formal English. Texting short-cuts not acceptable. Emoticons may be used to help convey feelings, but they are not a substitutes for clearly written statements. Because I will be eight hours away, the best way to reach me is by email. We can arrange a time to connect by phone, or by video conference if you want to talk through some particular aspect of the course. Outside of office hours, I will check my email twice daily at 11:00 AM and 4:00 PM (EST). If I receive an email from you, you can expect a response within 48 hours. It may be sooner if received during online office hours. If a question is asked that is answered in the syllabus or on Blackboard, I reserve the right to not respond, or reply with "Please see the syllabus."

Reading
There will be a significant amount of reading in this course. Some the reading will be in the assigned textbook, but some may require you to read an article online. When you are reading these materials, you are expected to connect the information read to concepts we are discussing and things you already know. You will be expected to demonstrate your understanding through mini tests and discussion boards. There will be no videos of lectures.

Academic Integrity
Academic integrity violations (including cheating, plagiarism, and facilitating either) are serious matters and will not be tolerated. See the West Virginia Wesleyan College Student Handbook for further discussion. Any violations of academic integrity in will result in, at minimum, failure of the assignment and likely failure in the course. All incidents are reported to the Dean of the College. **MAKE SURE YOU CITE ALL OF YOUR WORK**.

Late Policy
You will notice that there are generally two due dates for each week: Wednesday and Saturday (see course schedule for more information). You are expected to turn in assignments and deliver/upload your speeches on time. In order to remove any potential confusion about deadlines, please note that all deadlines for your assignments and class work will be in adherence to Eastern Standard Time (EST). **There are no exceptions. Computer or equipment failure/access is not an excuse.** Not feeling well and lack of preparation are not excuses to miss an assignment. Late posts or responses are accounted for within the grading rubric for the discussion board because late posts have an effect on the ability of your peers to finish their assignments. You will not receive credit for discussions posted five days past the due date. Other late assignments will lose 10% each day late, and will never be accepted after five days past the due date.

Allowances may be made based on the following criteria:
- Serious illness or injury resulting in an emergency visit to a physician or hospital that is accompanied by a valid, signed doctor's note or other official medical document, and results in the student's physical inability to complete weekly assignments.
- Absence due to death of a family member.

In order for allowances to be made, you must notify me of your personal situation well in advance. For a grief-related allowance, you should notify me as soon as you become aware of the situation. For a serious medical situation that leaves you unable to satisfactorily complete coursework, you must notify me as soon as physically possible. If you wait until the end of the semester to notify me of a problem that arose earlier in the semester, no accommodations can be retroactively made to help you work through that situation.

Student Support

I realize that a variety of academic and non-academic issues may arise during the time of this course. What follows are brief descriptions of the types of support available to you during the semester. More details and specific resources can be found in the Student Support course link at the left. It is just below the Content course link.

Withdrawing
Throughout the duration of the semester, you can email the professor and the registrar when you want to withdraw. The add/drop period is during the first week of the semester. If you want to withdraw from the class after that period, you will need to retrieve a withdraw form from the registrar, fill it out, and return it to the registrar.

Special Learning Needs
If you have a physical, medical, psychological, or learning disability that is going to or require accommodation, please let me know immediately. More information is found in the Academic Support and the Accessibility folders in the Student Support course link at the left.

Library
The WVWC Library offers information resources for students at all levels and all disciplines. Library resources are a key component of academic success. Google and Wikipedia as research tools will not lead to acceptable research assignments, papers, or presentations. The library's reference and instructional staff is available by phone, by email, by text, and via reference chat on the library homepage to assist students with research inquiries. Starting place for accessing library resources is here.

Technical Support
Use the "Technical Support" folder for computer or internet issues. If you cannot find the answer to your issue, contact the HelpDesk. Their contact information can be found here. For troubleshooting and information in general about Blackboard, follow this link or click the "Help with Blackboard" link in column on the left-hand side of our class.

Personal Support
Should you become overwhelmed during this course, there are a variety of avenues for working through this difficulty. Feel free to contact me by email or telephone. Also, at the Student Support course link at the left side of each page, you can find a folder titled "Personal Support." In that folder you have contact information for advisors who can help you. There are also a variety of links to guidance and practices which may help you manage this demanding period of time.

Institutional Policies
The Student Handbook is here along with direct links to the institutional policies on non-discrimination, students with disabilities and academic integrity.

The College's Policy Regarding Students with Disabilities
West Virginia Wesleyan College ensures that no qualified person shall, by reason of a disability, be denied access to, excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of any program or activity operated by the College or be subjected to discrimination under any of its programs or activities. The College shall make reasonable accommodations to the known limitations of an otherwise qualified student with a disability to enable the qualified student with the disability to have equal access to educational opportunities, programs and activities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 [29 U.S.C. 794(a)] and Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) [42 U.S.C. § 12101, et seq.].

If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation in order to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements, according to our Student Handbook http://www.wvwc.edu/MCEUploads/PDFs/Life%20@%20WVWC/Campus%20Life/student-handbook-15-16.pdf, with the Director of the Learning Center (473-8499).

Statement of Social Justice/ Non-Discrimination Policy
The College fully subscribes to the development of individuals as worthy persons who should be nurtured to their fullest potential regardless of race, color, creed, religion, age, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status, genetic predisposition, national or ethnic origin, or physical or mental disability. I concur with the College's commitment to social justice and expect to foster a nurturing learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. Any suggestions as to how to further such a positive and open environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Grading Rubric for Discussions

Criteria	Critical Analysis	Relevance to Post	Contribution to Learning Community	Quality of Writing	Timeliness
Exemplary	Response goes beyond the understanding of the content and includes relevant information from outside sources to support the main points.	Post is relevant to the discussion content and discusses other outside sources relevant to the content.	Attempts to motivate further discussion beyond the required participation. Interacts freely.	Free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style promotes communication.	Original posts are added during the first half of the discussion period.
Proficient	Response indicates an understanding of the content including concepts and terminology. Proper citation.	Post is related to the content of the discussion content.	Responses contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Mostly free of grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors. Writing style mostly promotes communication.	Original posts are present, but may have been posted during the last half of the discussion period.
Limited	Response does not go beyond summarizing the reading. Little or no reference to outside sources or relevant current applications. Incorrect or no citations.	Responses mention the reading, but does not discuss any points from the reading. Response is short and/or irrelevant to the post.	Responses sometimes contribute to the discussion by asking related questions, elaborating on relevant topics discussed in post, or making an educated oppositional statement.	Some grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Original posts are added at the last minute, leaving no time for classmates to respond.
Incorrect	Little or no evidence that the readings were completed or understood.	Response is all opinion-based or anecdotal evidence. Does not reference the content.	Feedback is irrelevant or says something along the lines of, "I agree with her."	Use of texting/informal language; several grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors.	Post is made after the deadline
Unacceptable	No post.	No post.	No feedback to fellow student.	No post.	No post.