

COMM313 Persuasion (Fall, 2019)

Instructor: Dr. Xun Zhu (Joe)
 Office: Columbia Hall 2370K
 Office Hours: T/TH: 11:00 am to 12:00 pm (I'm happy to schedule an appointment if these times don't work for you; just ask!)
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Blackboard and Email: My contact information is also listed on the Blackboard. Please be sure to check UND email and announcements on the Blackboard *frequently and regularly* for information and instructions that I may distribute to you.

Course Description A fundamental function that communication serves is to influence others. This course is designed to introduce you to social scientific theories of how people influence and are influenced by others through communication activities.

Course Objectives By the end of the semester, each student should:

- *Recognize* the intentional or unintentional ways in which others are influencing them in real life
- *Understand* and *describe* theories and research that account for social influence in action
- *Evaluate* real-world persuasive campaigns utilizing the theories and research covered in class, and provide theory-guided critique and advice for improvement
- *Engage* in intellectual conversation, *defend* a position, and *articulate* arguments

For me, I expect to learn more about social influence through my interaction with students in the class.

Course Materials

1. Required:
 - Gass, R.H., & Seiter, J. S. (2016). *Persuasion, social influence and compliance gaining*. New York, NY: Routledge.
 - Additional readings or materials posted on Blackboard
2. Recommended (The following materials will not be covered in the courses. Rather, they are recommended for your future readings if you develop further interests in persuasion from a social scientific perspective)
 - Cialdini, R. B. (2012). *Pre-suasion: A revolutionary way to influence and persuade*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.
 - Fischhoff, B., Brewer, N.T., & Downs, J.S. (2011). *Communicating risks and benefits: An evidence-based user's guide*. Washington, DC: Food and Drug Administration.
 - Nier, J. (2007). *Taking sides: Clashing sides in social psychology*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
 - Kenrick, D. T., Goldstein, N., & Braver, S. L. (Eds.). (2012). *Six degrees of social influence: Science, application and the psychology of Robert Cialdini*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Course Assessment

Grade Composition			
Assignments	Opportunities	Points	%
Plagiarism Training	One opportunity	—	—
Class Participation	Each class	200	20%
Discussion Leader	One opportunity	50	5%
Student-Created Test Questions	Each week	150	15%
Assignments and Presentation	Three assignments	400	40%
Exams	Two exams (100 pts each)	200	20%
TOTAL		1000	100%

Final grades will be computed based on the following point totals:

- A = 900-1000 pts
- B = 800-899 pts
- C = 700-799 pts
- D = 600-699 pts
- F = 599 pts or below

Note: I do not round grades up on either individual assignments or final grades. This decision is precisely due to the difficulties of drawing a line (e.g., Why is it legitimate to round up 89.9% to 90% but not bump 89.8% to 90%?).

Course Assignments The following description presents a brief introduction to assignments and an exam required for this course. The specific description for each of them will be detailed throughout the class.

Plagiarism training module. Department of Communication at the UND is committed to promoting scholarly integrity. To help you achieve that goal, you will be asked complete (or verify that you have previously completed) training in how to avoid plagiarism. You can complete this training by logging onto www.indiana.edu/~academy/firstPrinciples/index.html. You are required to complete this training even if you may have received other plagiarism training. Once completed, please upload the completion certificate to the course’s Blackboard site. Completion of this training will be necessary to pass the course. That is, failure to document that you have completed the training will result in the grade of Incomplete (unless you are earning a D or F; those grades will be posted). Completion of the training will not affect your total score in the course. Upon the completion of the plagiarism training module, you must understand that there is no legitimate excuse for committing intentional or unintentional plagiarism. It is also expected that you will do everything you can to avoid committing academic dishonesty. If you are not clear whether or not certain practices are violations of academic

dishonesty, please do not hesitate to email me, come to the office hours, or make an appointment for discussion.

Class Participation. Participation is essential to complete the course objectives. This class will be conducted from a lecture/discussion format. I do not see class as a simple repetition of what has been presented in your reading materials. Rather, I see class as an opportunity to collectively develop a deeper understanding of theories on persuasion and their relevance to real-life issues. To make productive use of this time, you are expected to read all the work required before each class and join the class to offer your thought and ideas. You may earn up to full participation points per class through your *reading-based, enthusiastic, and thoughtful* contribution to the discussion. It is important to note that being present (and awake) is not enough to earn participation points.

Discussion Leader. You will lead the discussion of a small group of students on a case study and present the collective thoughts of your group to the class. There will be 4 case studies throughout the semester, and you will choose one to lead the discussion. The date inquiry will be distributed at the beginning of the semester. Absence on your assigned day will lead to a loss of the points for discussion leader. You may swap with another classmate for the date on serving as a discussion leader as long as both parties agree AND both communicate with the instructor two days ahead of your assigned discussion.

Student-created test questions. Exams can be difficult, but writing a good exam can be as difficult as taking one. While instructors typically write the test questions for students, such practices have benefits for students as well. Research showed that students develop a better understanding of course content and feel less anxious about the exam if they learn how to create exam questions. Hence, each week, you will create and submit five test questions relevant to the readings of the week. *The questions should be multiple choices (i.e., each with four possible answers).* For each question, you will provide the correct answer and a brief explanation. Notice that simply say “see page 3 in the textbook” is not a good explanation. Then you will answer another student’s questions and provide constructive feedback. The test questions should be directly relevant to the reading of the week. You should post your test questions on the Blackboard by the end of each Friday and provide your feedback no later than 9 am the following Tuesday. *Late posts of questions or responses will result in a loss of weekly points for the corresponding category.*

Written and presented assignments. Throughout the semester, you will complete three assignments that are designed to help you apply the theories and research covered in class to real-world problems. The specific requirements for each assignment will be provided in separate handouts later. But in general, you are expected to submit a brief report that accurately describes one or two theories, articulates your analysis, and offers theory-guided critique and recommendations. You will also present your ideas in class before submitting your written report. *The first and second assignments will be individual-based.* Each assignment is worth 125 points in total, with 100 points for each written report and 25 points for each poster presentation. *For the third assignment, you will collaborate with two other classmates.* The third assignment is worth 150 points in total, with 100 points for the written report and 50 points for the group presentation.

Exams. Two exams will cover materials in the assigned readings, lectures, slides, assignments, and case presentations. Before each exam, there will be a review session where I will help you familiarize the types of questions to be asked in the exam. The exams are non-cumulative.

Research participation. Throughout the semester, there will be several opportunities for you to participate in research projects. Your research participation in any project is voluntary. Research participation will be compensated in the form of extra points. The number of extra points will not exceed 1% of the total grades. Credit compensation varies from projects to projects, depending on the amount of effort and time. In general, the student may receive 5 points for each one-half hour of out-of-class participation. In the case when you choose not to participate in research, alternative assignments will be provided that requires an equivalent amount of effort.

Course Policies

Scholarly integrity. All students are subject to the University of North Dakota Code of Student Life, including, but not limited to, issues of academic dishonesty. For more information, see <https://www1.und.edu/code-of-student-life/appendix-b.cfm#2>

Deadlines. All assignments must be submitted to the Blackboard. **Please note that all the deadlines for assignment submission are in Central Standard Time (CST).** In general, a 20% penalty will be given to each day the assignment is turned in late. However, late submission will not be penalized for unavoidable or legitimate circumstances, which must be properly documented. If certain deadline conflicts with religious observance, please notify me of your schedule during the first two weeks of the semester. I may allow for makeup exams if you have a legitimate and verifiable excuse at my discretion (e.g., a family or medical emergency with proper documents, and a university-sanctioned event), AND if you contact me for approval before the exam. No make-up opportunities will be provided for student-created test questions, digital participation, reaction essays, and research participation.

Electronic devices. Electronics can be a major distraction in class and disrupt class discussion. Resist the urge to checking emails and social media, and browsing websites may be easier said than done. There is accumulating evidence that supports the potential distracting effects of electronics in-class activities (see [Fried, 2008 for an example](#)). But, because many of us often read online or take notes on laptops or tablets, I will allow electronics in class. However, if I find they become distracting, I reserve the right to disallow them in class. I highly recommend you take notes on paper, for better knowledge retention and comprehension (read more about [the benefits of longhand notes taking](#)).

Office hours. I encourage you to take full advantage of office hours. You are welcome to come by office hours without an appointment, or make an appointment if the office hours do not fit with your schedule. Remember, ***you do not need a crisis to use office hours***. Instead, you can use them to ask questions about course materials specifically, or communication in general, to get additional reading materials, and to ask for clarification on the assignments.

Course Citizenship. You are expected to be polite and respectful in your responses to others' ideas, even if you may disagree. One way to sharpen your communication skills and have your voice heard is to provide constructive feedback on your classmates' ideas and presentations, both online and offline.

Teaching style. While I make every effort to accommodate all different learning styles in class, I tend to have a Facilitator teaching style, which takes a "student-centered learning" approach. Students who are "independent, active, collaborative learners thrive in this environment." If you are interested in gaining a better understanding of yourself as a learner, please refer to the Learning Style Inventory at <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education->

[Services/Documents/IDEAS%202014%20Handouts/LearningStyleInventory.pdf](#)

Student resources. To get confidential guidance and support for disability accommodation requests, students are expected to register with DSS at www.UND.edu/disability-services/, 180 McCannel Hall, or 701.777.3425. You could access to resources for helping students in distress through the UND Cares program <https://und.edu/student-life/student-rights-responsibilities/>

Resources

Technical requirements/assistance. For technical assistance, please contact UND Tech Support at 701-777-2222. For a list of Technical Requirements, please visit the website. Visit techsupport.und.edu for their hours, help documents, and other resources. To succeed in this course, at a minimum, you should be able to: 1) Navigate in and use basic Blackboard functions; 2) Download and open electronic documents; 3) Create, save, and upload/attach electronic documents; 4) Send, receive, and manage email.

Access and navigation. This course was developed and will be facilitated by utilizing Blackboard. To get started with the course, please go to <http://blackboard.und.edu>. You will need your NDUS.Identifier, Username, and Password to log in to the course. If you do not know your NDUS Identifier or have forgotten your password, please go to <https://und.edu/uit>. On the left side course menu in Blackboard, there is a “Lessons” tab. Inside Lessons, you will find all the required readings, videos, and assignments/activities for the week. An overview of each week can be found in Blackboard under the Schedule tab.

Announcement. Announcements will be posted in Blackboard regularly. Be sure to check the class announcements regularly as they will contain important information about class assignments and other class matters.

Email. You are encouraged to post your questions about the course in the FAQs discussion board forum in the Blackboard site. This is an open forum in which you and your classmates are encouraged to answer each other’s questions. But, if you need to contact me directly, check the Faculty tab in Blackboard or the syllabus for my contact information. I will respond back to you within 24 hours during the week and may not respond on the weekend until the next business day.

Writing center. The Writing Center is a resource for students, faculty, and staff working on writing projects in any field and at any stage of the writing process. Located in Merrifield Hall, Room 12, the Writing Center offers free individual sessions with a writing consultant. Make an appointment online at <http://writingcenter.und.edu>.

Seek help when in distress. We know that while college is a wonderful time for most students, some students may struggle. You may experience students in distress on campus, in your classroom, in your home, and within residence halls. Distressed students may initially seek assistance from faculty, staff members, their parents, and other students. In addition to the support we can provide to each other, there are also professional support services available to students on campus through the Dean of Students and University Counseling Center. Both staffs are available to consult with you about getting help or providing a friend with the help that he or she may need. For more additional information, please go to <http://und.edu/und-cares/>.

Notice of nondiscrimination. It is the policy of the University of North Dakota that no person shall be discriminated against because of race, religion, age, color, gender, disability, national origin, creed, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, marital status,

veteran's status, or political belief or affiliation and the equal opportunity and access to facilities shall be available to all. Concerns regarding Title IX, Title VI, Title VII, ADA, and Section 504 may be addressed to: Donna Smith, Director of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action and Title IX Coordinator, 401 Twamley Hall, 701.777.4171, und.affirmativeactionoffice@UND.edu or the Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Dept. of Education, 500 West Madison, Suite 1475, Chicago, IL 60611 or any other federal agency.

Reporting of sexual violence. If you or a friend has experienced sexual violence, such as sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence or stalking, or sex-based harassment, please contact UND's Title IX Coordinator, Donna Smith, for assistance: 701.777.4171; donna.smith@UND.edu; or go to <http://und.edu/affirmative-action/title-ix>.

Course Calendar

Week	Tuesday	Thursday
8/26	Course introduction & Syllabus	Why study persuasion?
9/2	Can we detect lies?	Case study I: Theranos
9/9	Nonverbal influence	Can people be brainwashed?
9/16	Preparation for Assignment I	Conference: No class meeting
9/23	Assignment I Presentation	Attitude and Measurement
9/30	Cognitive Consistency	Case study II: Apocalypse and puppy
10/7	Exam I Review and Preparation	Conformity in groups
10/14	Case study III: Orange, survival, and Milgram	Exam I
10/21	Keep on the sunny side? Gain and loss framing messages	Language: Intensity and accent
10/28	Threat appeals	Preparation for Assignment II
11/4	Assignment II Presentation	Is subliminal persuasion a hokum?
11/11	Visual persuasion: Is a picture worth a thousand words?	Field work day: Collecting visuals
11/18	Case study IV: Visual analysis	Looking for opinion leaders?
11/25	Inoculation and resistance	Thanksgiving: no class meeting
12/2	Assignment III presentation: Day 1	Assignment III presentation: Day 2
12/9	Ethics, Exam 2 review and prep	Summary/ Feedback
12/16	<u>Exam 2: 12/17 Tuesday, 8 am – 10 am Columbia Hall, 1550</u>	