

**COMM 360: Persuasion**  
**Fall 2015**  
**Dr. Jayson L. Dibble**  
**Hope College**

**TEXTBOOKS:**

- Cialdini, R. B. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Gass, R. H., & Seiter, J. S. (2014). *Persuasion, social influence, and compliance gaining* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

**COURSE PURPOSE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

The study of persuasion is one of the oldest subdisciplines in the field of human communication. Persuasion is also of central interest in fields such as advertising and marketing (e.g., product promotion, public service campaigns), sociology, political science (e.g., voting studies, political campaigns), and interpersonal influence.

The purpose of COMM 360 is to offer an overview of classical and contemporary approaches to persuasion, social influence, and compliance gaining. Through this course you will develop a deeper understanding of certain persuasion theories, including the cognitive processes underlying attitude and behavioral change, and you will learn how these theories operate in your daily life. With these goals in mind we will use current events, popular culture, gender, interpersonal relationships, and the like to help you learn. We will also underscore the link between theory and practical application through various activities in and out of the classroom.

Accordingly, upon completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. identify persuasive processes;
2. describe the operation of several persuasion theories that are central to the field;
3. apply persuasion theories and concepts to real-world experiences;
4. identify and analyze critically persuasive messages in field settings; and
5. articulate, defend, and rebut arguments appropriately in a college debate setting.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**

**1. Two examinations (50%):** Exams will be of a format featuring multiple choice, matching, short answer, true-false items, and/or essay items. The exams will be noncumulative, although you should expect to utilize knowledge gained for the first exam in order to succeed on the final exam.

**2. Discussion Leader Exercise (10%):** I believe teaching is an incredibly effective means of learning. Moreover, I don't want to listen to myself speak the whole time each day. Thus, you will have a chance to lead the discussion of that week's course material. Working in a group of 2-3, you will use 20 minutes of class time to prepare and lead a discussion of some aspect of the material, locate and lead a relevant activity, screen and discuss a brief relevant video clip, and/or

something else that enhances your peers' learning of the material. A signup sheet will be distributed early in the semester, and all ideas will require instructor approval in advance of the presentation date. Complete details are forthcoming.

**3. Field Persuasion Reaction Paper (15%):** There will be one reaction paper assigned during the semester. You will participate in an out-of-class activity designed to let you see real-world persuasion techniques in action (e.g., small kiosks at a public shopping mall). After your time in the field, you will create and submit a 4-5 page essay detailing your reactions. Your essay should address the central messages and persuasive strategies used, how those messages/persuasive strategies relate to course topics and theoretical concepts, and your personal reactions to the experience. Complete details are forthcoming.

**4. COMM 360 Debate Tournament (25%):** Improve your ability to attend to persuasion and advocate for prosocial causes through college debate! We will spend the last month of the semester learning about one form of structured debate, British Parliamentary Style. Working in teams of three, you will carefully research information related to some proposition (to be revealed later), and develop careful speeches in support of your position. Then, all teams will debate their side through an in-class tournament. Our COMM 360 Debate Tournament will begin during the last two days of class, with the final rounds occurring during our scheduled final exam time. Complete details will be distributed once we begin the debate unit.

**TENTATIVE SCHEDULE:**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Reading</b>
1	<b>COURSE INTRODUCTION</b>	
	Why study persuasion? What counts as persuasion? Pure vs. borderline cases	G&S Ch. 1 G&S Ch. 2 pp. 23-35
2	<b>DUAL PROCESS MODELS &amp; SUBLIMINAL PERSUASION</b>	
	“Click, whirr” Elaboration likelihood model Heuristic systematic model Click, whirr persuasion at Whole Foods	Cialdini Ch. 1 pp. 1-12 G&S Ch. 2 pp. 35-40  Lindstrom (2011)
	Subliminal persuasion Video: <i>The Ad &amp; the Id</i>	G&S Ch. 15 pp. 337-340 Rogers (1992) Rogers & Seiler (1994) Vokey & Read (1985)
3	<b>ATTITUDES &amp; CONSISTENCY</b>	
	What is an attitude? Theory of reasoned action/TPB	G&S Ch. 3 pp. 43-57
	The role of consistency in persuasion Theory of cognitive dissonance	G&S Ch. 3 pp. 57-68 Cialdini Ch. 3
4	<b>RECEIVER PERSUADABILITY</b>	
	Social judgment theory	G&S Ch. 5 pp. 104-108

	Perceptual contrast & assimilation	Cialdini Ch. 1 pp. 12-16
	How mental systems believe: Descartes vs. Spinoza You can't not believe everything you read	Gilbert (1991) Gilbert (1993)
5	<b>SEQUENTIAL PERSUASION &amp; RECIPROCITY</b>	
	Sequential persuasion Dump-and-chase	G&S Ch. 10 Boster et al. (2009)
	Reciprocity	Cialdini Ch. 2
6	<b>EXAM 1</b>	
7	<b>LANGUAGE &amp; PERSUASION</b>	
	Language & persuasion "Canoeist goes to court"	G&S Ch. 7 Bradsher (1999)
8	<b>CREDIBILITY &amp; SOURCE EFFECTS ON PERSUASION</b>	
	What is credibility?	G&S Ch. 4
9	<b>SIMILARITY, LIKING, GROUPS, &amp; AUTHORITY</b>	
	Effects of similarity & liking on persuasion	Cialdini Ch. 5
	Group influence & conformity – Asch's experiments Obedience to authority – Milgram's experiments	G&S Ch. 6 pp. 121-132, 134-142 Cialdini Ch. 6
10	<b>FEAR APPEALS, SOCIAL PROOF, &amp; SCARCITY</b>	
	Emotional appeals & fear appeals Extended parallel processing model Peddling panic & paranoia	G&S Ch. 13 Lindstrom Ch. 2 (2011)
11	<b>ETHICS &amp; EXAM 2</b>	
	Persuasion ethics	G&S Ch. 16
12	<b>COLLEGE LEVEL DEBATE</b>	
	Introduction to Austral-Asian style debate	TBA
	Making solid arguments & refuting opponents' arguments	
13	<b>USING RESEARCH &amp; REASONING WITH DATA</b>	
		TBA
14	<b>PREPARE POSITIONS ON PROPOSITIONS</b>	
		TBA
15	<b>COMM 360 DEBATE TOURNAMENT</b>	
	Preliminary rounds	
16	<b>FINAL EXAM WEEK</b>	
	Tournament final rounds	