Communication 492 – Persuasion

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Office Hours: Mondays, 10 am-noon; Tuesdays, 11 am-1 pm and by appointment.

Texts:


Classroom: Com 206; M, W, F; 9:00-9:50 a.m.

Course Description: COMM 492. Persuasion (3)

Prerequisites: Communication 300 and 350. Admission to a major or minor in the School of Communication. Key variables and theories in the persuasion process; persuasive sources, messages, receiver variables, propaganda, brainwashing, cognitive, behavioral, and social theories of persuasion. (Formerly numbered Communication 592.)

Course Overview:

In this class, we will consider theoretical and strategic approaches to the study of persuasion in public speaking, visual media, multi-media, written texts, and other forms of rhetorical artifacts and communication acts. The persuasion class will expose students to the rhetorical and psychological features that render certain kinds of arguments successful in an ideal context. As a result of taking this class, students will be able to:

1. Identify dominant persuasion theories from the disciplines of communication, linguistics, and psychology.

2. Apply principles and practices of persuasion in the construction of everyday arguments and messages.

3. Recognize the classical rhetorical strategies used to advance sound arguments.

4. Understand basic principles of inductive and deductive logic.

5. Understand differences of approach, methodology, and conceptualization of persuasion from interdisciplinary perspectives.

6. Identify forms of deviant logic/fallacious reasoning.

7. Understand key variables that affect our ability to persuade (e.g., variables within the “Sender/Receiver” model of communication).

8. Effectively deliver arguments to a diverse audience for a particular reason or cause using verbal, visual, and multimedia mediums.
**Course Policies**

1. Unless specified by your instructor, all documents should be typed, double-spaced, 12-point font, and produced in a hard-copy (paper format). Emailed documents will not be accepted without prior permission from your instructor.

2. This communication course will cover many areas of controversy, where your views and opinions may vastly differ from those of your peers. Please be respectful of others perspectives, even if you disagree, as this is essential to create a safe, dynamic, and challenging learning environment. Students are free to disagree with any and all perspectives, but should remain respectful in how they present counter-ideas and concepts.

3. Please refrain from using cell phones or other forms of technology that are not essential for note taking while present in class.

4. Please bring your required textbook to class daily.

5. Students are allowed a total of 2 unexcused absences in class, before experiencing a grade reduction. If a student accumulates a total of 2 unexcused absences, that student’s grade will be lowered by one full letter grade for every 2 absences thereafter (e.g., at 4 unexcused absences, an otherwise “A student” could only receive a “B”). For all students who travel for sports, music, or other team or organizational purposes, you must inform me verbally of your trip in advance to receive reasonable accommodations. Traveling students must provide documentation such as an official university academic excuse form prior to travel. After-the-fact excuses, even if university sponsored, will not be recognized by your instructor, and missing assignments will be marked as late or receive a failing grade. Bottom line: Communicate with your instructor!

6. Please come to class prepared, ready to learn, and exemplify a positive and open-minded attitude each day.

7. Plagiarism – Plagiarism is perhaps one of the most serious offenses that instructors are trained to look for in their student’s work. We will extensively cover what constitutes plagiarism in class. Students caught plagiarizing work will: a) receive a failing grade on the immediate assignment, b) be reported to appropriate academic review boards, c) may receive a failing grade for the course, and d) may be subject to expulsion from the university. Do not steal other’s work. Give credit where credit is due, and enhance your overall ethos by citing credible sources in the field.

8. Please refrain from talking during class. Even quiet discussions with neighboring “peer” students can quickly add to “noise” in the classroom, making learning and lecturing very difficult.

9. Please stay awake in class. Students who perpetually fall asleep in class are not prepared, or have clearly taken on a work/learning load that they cannot manage. As such, routine violations of this
standard will result in significantly lower participation points at the end of the semester. Being alive, alert, and ready to learn is a prerequisite for this class and should be maintained. If students fall asleep in class, I reserve the right to call on them for critical insight into the concepts being covered. Don’t sleep in class!

10. At a minimum, Blackboard will be used to post official grades so that students may verify grades received for hard-copy assignments. At times, I will post information about assignments onto Blackboard, but under no circumstances will I replicate the information provided in lectures onto Blackboard. This means that students must come to class to retrieve important information. Do not send your instructor email messages via Blackboard.

11. Due to the nature of the assignments in the persuasion class, some projects may take longer to complete than others. As such, your instructor reserves the right to cancel, make alterations, or postpone any of the regular assignments from the course. Any changes or alternations will be verbally cited in class a minimum of 1 week before any regular project would be due.

**Spoof Ad Assignment – 10 %**

For the spoof ad assignment, you will be placed into groups and expected to construct a spoof of a real ad, campaign, or speech act, so as to expose some deeper, lurking injustice. Students may use any and all means to produce the spoof, including video recordings, web development, digital presentations, posters, art, live skits, fake radio or news broadcasts, etc. Each group must also produce a 5-6 written document that describes: a) the original rhetorical artifact, including the reasons why it is being challenged, b) the thought process that went into the spoof design, and c) how the group divided duties to accomplish the task.

**Theory Experiment and Paper – 10 %**

For the persuasive theory experiment and paper, students will be asked to apply two of the persuasive theories covered in class from the lectures and the text, to a real-world communication act or rhetorical artifact. This paper should be 3-4 pages in length, and should: a) effectively describe 2 theories of persuasion, b) describe a communication act, c) apply the persuasive theories specified, and d) generate conclusions based on the application of such theories to the communication act. The purpose of this paper is to attempt to anchor theoretical concepts with real-world communication situations and examples, to determine the situational accuracy of such theories.

**Persuasive Symposium Speech (group assignment) – 10 %**

For the persuasive symposium speech assignment, students will be arranged into groups and asked to identify a key area of social, political, environmental, or economic concern. Students will then be asked to identify the causes of such problems. Finally, students will be asked to offer a pragmatic solution to the identified problem. Each speech should occupy 15-20 minutes of time, should have visual support, 6 credible academic sources (must be orally cited during the speech), and should conform to either the problem-cause-solution model or the Monroe’s Motivated Sequence model, which will be covered extensively in class.

**Academic Debates – 20%**
As a final showcase project for the persuasion course, students will be asked to demonstrate their grasp of persuasive theories and concepts by performing in live, classroom debates. Students will be prearranged into groups, who will prepare, research, and ultimately argue against another team, trying to disprove the original team’s topic. Audience members will serve as critics, and will evaluate each of the debaters persuasive abilities based on a mutually agreed up rubric.

**Midterm Exam – 20%**

The midterm exam will cover relevant theories and concepts from class lectures and the course text.  

**Final Exam – 20%**

The final exam will cover relevant theories and concepts from class lectures and the course text.

**Participation – 10 %**

Participation is heavily based on daily contributions to the class (e.g., punctuality, direct oral communication in class, interrogation of issues, participation in routine class activities, and the maintenance of a generally positive, open-minded, and inquisitive attitude). Attendance also affects participation points.

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**THE ACADEMIC DISHONESTY POLICY OF THE SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION**

Plagiarism is theft of intellectual property. It is one of the highest forms of academic offense because in academe, it is a scholar’s words, ideas, and creative products that are the primary measures of identity and achievement. Whether by ignorance, accident, or intent, theft is still theft, and misrepresentation is still misrepresentation. Therefore, the offense is still serious, and is treated as such.

**Overview:**

In any case in which a Professor or Instructor identifies evidence for charging a student with violation of academic conduct standards or plagiarism, the presumption will be with that instructor’s determination. However, the faculty/instructor(s) will confer with the director to substantiate the evidence. Once confirmed, the evidence will be reviewed with the student. If, following the review with the student, the faculty member and director determine that academic dishonesty has occurred, the evidence will be submitted to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities. The report “identifies the student who was found responsible, the general nature of the offense, the action taken, and a recommendation as to whether or not additional action should be considered by the campus judicial affairs office.” (CSSR Website[1]).


**Intellectual Property:**
The syllabus, lectures and lecture outlines are personal copyrighted intellectual property of the instructor, which means that any organized recording for anything other than personal use, duplication, distribution, or profit is a violation of copyright and fair use laws.

Proper Source Attribution:

Proper attribution occurs by specifying the source of content or ideas. This is done by (a) providing quotation marks around text, when directly quoted, and (b) clearly designating the source of the text or information relied upon in an assignment. Text that is identical with another source but without quotation marks constitutes plagiarism, regardless of whether you included the original source. Specific exemplary infractions and consequences:

a. Reproducing a whole paper, paragraph, or large portions of unattributed materials (whether represented by: (i) multiple sentences, images, or portions of images; or (ii) by percentage of assignment length) without proper attribution, will result in assignment of an “F” in the course, and a report to Student Rights and Responsibilities.

b. Reproducing a sentence or sentence fragment with no quotation marks but source citation, or subsets of visual images without source attribution, will minimally result in an “F” on the assignment. Repeated or serious cases will result in assignment of an “F” in the course, and a report to Student Rights and Responsibilities.

Self-plagiarism:

Students often practice some form of ‘double-dipping,’ in which they write on a given topic across more than one course assignment. In general, there is nothing wrong with double-dipping topics or sources, but there is a problem with double-dipping exact and redundant text. It is common for scholars to write on the same topic across many publication outlets; this is part of developing expertise and the reputation of being a scholar on a topic. Scholars, however, are not permitted to repeat exact text across papers or publications except when noted and attributed, as this wastes precious intellectual space with repetition and does a disservice to the particular source of original presentation by ‘diluting’ the value of the original presentation. Any time that a writer simply ‘cuts-and-pastes’ exact text from former papers into a new paper without proper attribution, it is a form of self-plagiarism. Consequently, a given paper should never be turned in to multiple classes. Entire paragraphs, or even sentences, should not be repeated word-for-word across course assignments. Each new writing assignment is precisely that, a new writing assignment, requiring new composition on the student’s part.

Secondary citations:

Secondary citation is not strictly a form of plagiarism, but in blatant forms, it can present similar ethical challenges. A secondary citation is citing source A, which in turn cites source B, but it is source B’s ideas or content that provide the basis for the claims the student intends to make in the assignment. For example, assume that there is an article by Jones (2006) in the student’s hands, in which there is a discussion or quotation of an article by Smith (1998). Assume further that what Smith seems to be saying is very important to the student’s analysis. In such a situation, the student should always try to
locate the original Smith source. In general, if an idea is important enough to discuss in an assignment, it is important enough to locate and cite the original source for that idea. There are several reasons for these policies: (a) Authors sometimes commit citation errors, which might be replicated without knowing it; (b) Authors sometimes make interpretation errors, which might be ignorantly reinforced; (c) Therefore, reliability of scholarly activity is made more difficult to assure and enforce; (d) By relying on only a few sources of review, the learning process is short-circuited, and the student's own research competencies are diminished, which are integral to any liberal education; (e) By masking the actual sources of ideas, readers must second guess which sources come from which citations, making the readers' own research more difficult; (f) By masking the origin of the information, the actual source of ideas is misrepresented. Some suggestions that assist with this principle:

When the ideas Jones discusses are clearly attributed to, or unique to, Smith, then find the Smith source and citation.

When the ideas Jones is discussing are historically associated more with Smith than with Jones, then find the Smith source and citation.

In contrast, Jones is sometimes merely using Smith to back up what Jones is saying and believes, and is independently qualified to claim, whether or not Smith would have also said it; in such a case, citing Jones is sufficient.

Never simply copy a series of citations at the end of a statement by Jones, and reproduce the reference list without actually going to look up what those references report—the only guarantee that claims are valid is for a student to read the original sources of those claims.

Solicitation for ghost writing:

Any student who solicits any third party to write any portion of an assignment for this class (whether for pay or not) violates the standards of academic honesty in this course. The penalty for solicitation (regardless of whether it can be demonstrated the individual solicited wrote any sections of the assignment) is F in the course.

TurnItIn.com

The papers in this course may be subject to electronic auditing for plagiarism via Turnitin.com and/or other intellectual defense programs.

“Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to TurnItIn.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the TurnItIn.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. You may submit your papers in such a way that no identifying information about you is included. Another option is that you may request, in writing, that your papers not be submitted to TurnItIn.com. However, if you choose this option you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate that the papers are your original work and do not include any plagiarized material” (source: language suggested by the CSU General Counsel and approved by the Center for Student’s Rights and Responsibilities at SDSU)
Specific exemplary infractions and consequences

Course failure: Reproducing a whole paper, paragraph, or large portions of unattributed materials without proper attribution, whether represented by: (a) multiple sentences, images, or portions of images; or (b) by percentage of assignment length, or solicitation of a ghost writer, will result in assignment of an “F” in the course in which the infraction occurred, and a report to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities (CSRR2).

Assignment failure: Reproducing a sentence or sentence fragment with no quotation marks, but with source citation, or subsets of visual images without source attribution, will minimally result in an “F” on the assignment, and may result in greater penalty, including a report to the CSRR, depending factors noted below. In this instance, an “F” may mean anything between a zero (0) and 50%, depending on the extent of infraction.

Exacerbating conditions--Amount: Evidence of infraction, even if fragmentary, is increased with a greater: (a) number of infractions; (b) distribution of infractions across an assignment; or (c) proportion of the assignment consisting of infractions.

Exacerbating conditions--Intent: Evidence of foreknowledge and intent to deceive magnifies the seriousness of the offense and the grounds for official response. Plagiarism, whether ‘by accident’ or ‘by ignorance,’ still qualifies as plagiarism—it is all students’ responsibility to make sure their assignments are not committing the offense.

Exceptions: Any exceptions to these policies will be considered on a case-by-case basis, and only under exceptional circumstances.

HOWEVER, THERE ARE NO EXCUSES ALLOWED BASED ON IGNORANCE OF WHAT CONSTITUTES PLAGIARISM, OR OF WHAT THIS POLICY IS.

Weekly Agenda

Please note that specific days are not given for specific assignments due to the varying time it takes to complete teach assignment. In general, however, your instructor will follow the weekly themes outlined below, with projects specified within those themes, to be completed by the end of the week unless otherwise specified.

Week One: Introduce persuasion course, students, teacher, and major assignments. Introduce classical rhetorical concepts of persuasion (e.g., rhetorical appeals, the Toulmin model of argument, types of claims, and persuasive communication contexts). Read chapter 2 of Influence and discuss in class.

Week Two: Persuasive writing and speaking theory.
Week Thee: Visual rhetoric as persuasion. Introduce theory experiment and paper to the class. Explore semiotics theory (sign as argument).

Week Four: Introduce basic persuasive speaking methods for effective delivery, patterns of organization, efficient use of evidence, and visual support. Theory experiment and paper due.

Week Five: Analysis of persuasive messages. Deconstructing dominant persuasive discourse and hegemonic ideologies. Considering propaganda as persuasion.

Week Six: Non-traditional approaches to persuasion. Art as advocacy. Introduce the spoof ad project to the class.

Week Seven: Perform spoof projects in class. Midterm Exam.

Week Eight: Persuasion in group and institutional contexts.

Week Nine: Perform symposium speeches. Argumentation as persuasion.

Week Ten: Continued Argumentation as persuasion.

Week Eleven: Academic Debates

Week Twelve: Academic Debates

Week Thirteen: Academic Debates

Week Fourteen: TBA

Week Fifteen: TBA (End of Course)