COMM 4829.002: Fall 2018  
Theories of Persuasion  
TR 12:30-1:50pm, PHYS 112

Professor: Dr. Joseph McGlynn III  
Email: Joseph.McGlynn@unt.edu  
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2pm-5pm, GAB 320E

Required Texts:  


Optional texts:  


Course Description  
The power of persuasion is all around us – but how does it work? Why are some people and messages more persuasive than others? This course explores the strategies of persuasion that people use to shape the attitudes and behaviors of others. The course explores persuasion across a variety of contexts and uses. We will discuss theories and findings that explain why, when, and how persuasive strategies have their effect. We will also investigate how strategies of persuasion in traditional interpersonal and mass media contexts are now being used in emerging digital and Internet technologies. This course is designed to sharpen your understanding of how and why persuasion occurs in interpersonal, rhetorical, organizational, and mass media contexts.
Learning Objectives

- Theoretical perspectives emphasizing the source, receiver, and message characteristics that play a role in persuasion
- Persuasion in both mass communication and interpersonal communication contexts
- Social influences of persuasion
- Cognitive influences of persuasion
- Importance and influence of cognitive heuristics
- Inoculation and resistance to persuasion attempts
Attendance and Participation
Learning is a social process. In order for this class to be successful, your attendance and participation are imperative. We will conduct this class as a seminar, performing the roles of teachers and learners simultaneously. This is possible only if everyone prepares in advance for class by giving thoughtful attention to the assigned readings, assuming a constructive role in class discussions, asking questions, thoughtfully attending to the ideas of others, and sharing your own insights.

If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to learn about assignments or any class work missed, ideally from other members of the class. If that is impossible for some reason, you are certainly free to then contact your instructor.

Due to the time constraints of this course, you are allowed 2 free absences (unexcused) this semester. With each additional absence, 5 percentage points will be deducted off your final grade per absence. Any student absence from class is considered unexcused with the exception of: personal or family illness requiring physician assistance/hospitalization, UNT school-sponsored activity, religious holy day or death of a family member. Documentation must be provided within 1 calendar week after the return to class. A verbal explanation is appreciated but will not suffice as sufficient documentation for consideration.

Please note: Most work-related absences, visits to the dentist, stomachache, car problems, & other general dilemmas do not count as excused absences. You are encouraged to save your free days for such inevitable instances.

Attendance Policy (UNT)
Responsibility for class attendance rests with the student. I reserve the right to request that a student be dropped from the course with a grade of “WF” upon the accumulation of a stated number of unexcused absences. An absence may be excused for the following reasons: a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose; active military service, including travel for that purpose; participation in an official university function; illness or other extenuating circumstances; pregnancy and parenting under Title IX; and when the University is officially closed by the President. The student is responsible for requesting an excused absence in writing as early in the semester as possible, and personally delivering to me satisfactory evidence to substantiate the excused absence.

Religious Holidays
In accordance with Section 51.911 of the Texas Education Code, UNT will allow a student who is absent from class for the observance of a religious holy day to take an examination or complete a scheduled assignment within a reasonable time. Students are required to file a written request with each professor within the first fifteen days of the semester to qualify for an excused absence.
Assignment Policies
You are responsible for turning work in on time. **Late work will not be accepted** without a documented “authorized absence” as defined by UNT (there will be no exceptions). You cannot make up quizzes under any circumstances. **Assignments are always due at the beginning of class.** If you are unable to attend class on the day an assignment is due, or if there is any remote chance your car might break down, you might get stuck in traffic, your printer won’t work, etc., you must email that assignment to me no later than the beginning of class to avoid penalties for lateness.

All assignments (unless otherwise noted) must be typed. Should you miss class due to an excused absence, you must complete the missed assignment and turn it in no later than the beginning of the next class period. You may also turn these in early. **Please note:** If any assignment is missed due to any reason other than documented death, extreme illness, religious observance, UNT activity (see absence policy above), you will be unable to make up the work. You MUST plan ahead for all assignments, both major and daily, as each constitute a significant part of your final grade and cannot easily be “redone” due to timing and spatial issues.

**Please note:** You should keep & store all graded work in case of a grade dispute at the end of the semester.

Grading of Assignments
All presentations and assignments are based upon a point system. Students will receive a thorough description of requirements for all assignments before they are due, as well as a detailed explanation of all assignments and grading procedures. Your work will be assessed in terms of concept comprehension and skill mastery. In regard to the skill mastery assessments, it must be stressed that although objective standards exist that can be used to determine the quality of an oral communication skill, a certain amount of subjectivity is inherent in the determination of the degree to which such standards are met.

It is your responsibility as the student to keep up with points accrued throughout the semester. Final points will be available at the end of the course.

**Please note:** Please do not contact your instructor via e-mail or phone in an attempt to receive any grades, points or extemporaneous grading issues as course policy does not allow for these transmissions. If you have a question regarding point amounts, please email your instructor with the request and they will bring that information to you in class.

After a graded assignment has been returned to you, you must wait a minimum of **24 hours** before contacting your instructor about a possible grade dispute. After a graded assignment has been returned to you, you have a maximum of **1 week** to contact your instructor regarding a possible grade dispute.
Academic Conduct
One fundamental goal of achieving a university degree is betterment of self; upon obtaining your degree you should be a more skilled writer and a more analytical thinker. To accomplish this goal and realize your true potential, all work should be uniquely your own in both word and thought. You should correctly document all words and ideas belonging to others according to APA (American Psychological Association) guidelines. Otherwise, you will not only fail yourself, but the course as well. Please consult the Code of Student Conduct for further information.

Academic Integrity Standards and Standards for Violations
According to UNT Policy 18.1.16, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Cheating. The willful giving or receiving of information in an unauthorized manner during an examination, illicitly obtaining examination questions in advance, using someone else’s work or written assignments as if they were your own, or any other dishonest means of attempting to fulfill a requirement of this course.

Plagiarism. The use of an author’s words or ideas as if they were your own without giving proper credit to the source, including but not limited to failure to acknowledge a direct quotation. Exact wording from a source must be identified by quotation marks and citation of the author. Concepts and ideas from sources should also be identified by citation of the author. Rules for citing quotes and ideas can be found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th edition. Intentionality is not a factor in determining plagiarism and its consequential penalties. Students are responsible for making themselves aware of the parameters and provisions of plagiarism.

Collusion. Intentionally aiding or attempting to aid another in an act of scholastic dishonesty, including but not limited to, providing a paper or project to another student; providing an inappropriate level of assistance; communicating answers to a classmate during an examination; removing tests or answer sheets from a test site, and allowing a classmate to copy answers.

Punishments for cheating, plagiarism, or collusion range from a grade of ZERO on the assignment in question to failure of the course.

Policy on Incompletes
An “Incomplete” will be awarded only in cases where 75% of the coursework has been completed and the grade is warranted by an exigent reason (e.g., medical, military). Inability to complete coursework in a timely fashion does not constitute an acceptable reason for requesting or receiving an incomplete.
Acceptable Student Behavior
Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students' opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Dean of Students to consider whether the student's conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct. The University's expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including University and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The Code of Student Conduct can be found at deanofstudents.unt.edu/conduct.

Firearms Policy
The University of North Texas is committed to providing a safe environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors, and to respecting the right of individuals who are licensed to carry a handgun where permitted by law. Individuals who are licensed to carry may do so on campus premises except in locations and at Activities prohibited by law or by this policy. Open carry is not permitted. See 04.001 Carrying of Concealed Handguns on Campus policy for more details.

Access to Information – Eagle Connect
Students’ access point for business and academic services at UNT is located at: my.unt.edu. All official communication from the University will be delivered to your Eagle Connect account. For more information, please visit the website that explains Eagle Connect and how to forward e-mail: eagleconnect.unt.edu/

Emergency Notification & Procedures
UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to Blackboard for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Retention of Student Records
Student records pertaining to this course are maintained in a secure location by the instructor of record. All records such as exams, answer sheets (with keys), and written papers submitted during the duration of the course are kept for at least one calendar year after course completion. Course work completed via the Blackboard online system, including grading information and comments, is also stored in a safe electronic environment for one year. Students have the right to view their individual record; however, information about students’ records will not be divulged to other individuals without proper written consent. Students are encouraged to review the Public Information Policy and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) laws and the University’s policy.
ADA Statement
UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one’s specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu

Student Perceptions of Teaching Effectiveness
Student feedback is important and an essential part of participation in this course. The student evaluation of instruction is a requirement for all organized classes at UNT. The survey will be made available during weeks 13 and 14 of the long semesters to provide students with an opportunity to evaluate how this course is taught. Students will receive an email from "UNT SPOT Course Evaluations via IASystem Notification" (no-reply@iasystem.org) with the survey link. Students should look for the email in their UNT email inbox. Simply click on the link and complete the survey. Once students complete the survey they will receive a confirmation email that the survey has been submitted. For additional information, please visit the spot website at www.spot.unt.edu or email spot@unt.edu.

Distractions
Turn off all cell phones and place them out of sight.

Disclaimer
This syllabus is an agreement between the instructional faculty member teaching a course and the students enrolled in that course. The syllabus establishes the instructional faculty member’s expectations, providing students with an overview of course content and explanations of course guidelines, procedures, and requirements. Consistent with UNT Policy 15.2.20, Academic Freedom and Academic Responsibility, instructional faculty have the academic freedom to design the course and present the syllabus as they wish, and instructional faculty have the academic responsibility to include specific items to fulfill state and institutional requirements.

This syllabus is intended to serve as a guideline for COMM 4829: Theories of Persuasion. Both UNT and your professor reserve the right to make modifications in content, schedule, and requirements as necessary to promote the optimal educational experiences within prevailing conditions affecting the course.
Assignments

In-Class Activities
(5 activities, 2 points each, 10 points total)

Participation is a key component of any course. These activities are unannounced opportunities to participate in the learning process during class periods. They will be extemporaneous in nature and completed during class.

Quizzes
(4 quizzes, 5 points each, 20 points total)

Reading is a key component to maximizing learning. Four unannounced quizzes over the reading assignments will provide opportunities to demonstrate your dedication to the reading and your understanding of the course material. Reading quizzes will cover the assigned reading material for that calendar day only, unless otherwise stated.

Please note: Due to their spontaneous nature, in-class activities and quizzes that are missed cannot be made up. Similarly, if you are late to class and the activity or quiz is completed before you arrive, the same principle applies.

Persuasion Analysis Assignments
(3 assignments, 25 points each, 75 points total)

Throughout the semester, you will complete three (3) written analyses of persuasion in everyday life. These analyses are spaced throughout the semester. Topics of the analyses will reflect the current topics for that week in the semester. The topics of analysis include: Reciprocity (Week 3), Social Proof (Week 6), and The Lazy Controller (Week 9).

For each assignment, complete a one-page single-spaced paper in which you 1) identify and describe the topic of interest 2) offer a pertinent and lively example of the topic from your own life, and 3) provide scholarly analysis of your example.

Each analysis assignment should revolve around an example from your own life; be it something that you have read, seen, heard, watched, smelled, or otherwise experienced that relates to the specified persuasive topic. The analyses should demonstrate that you are observing carefully and thinking critically about how to apply the topics learned in class to outside examples. Grades will be based on the relevance of the example described, and your ability to connect the example thoughtfully to course concepts and persuasion research.

The goal of these analyses is to apply your knowledge of the theories and concepts learned during class to better understand examples from the world at large.
Counter-Obvious Persuasive Appeal

(1 assignment, 40 points, 40 points total).

Every culture has broad, pervasive narratives that permeate the unknowing assumptions of its people. For this assignment, you will:

1) identify a cultural narrative that nearly everyone agrees with or assumes is true, and
2) persuade us to think otherwise.

To give you a few ideas, broad cultural narratives that permeate U.S. culture as assumptions include:

- Saving for retirement is a good idea
- Having a romantic partner is something to desire
- Buying a house is a smart investment for a young couple
- Teachers should be paid more
- Family is a priority
- Divorce is a negative outcome for relationships
- Being awake during the daytime is ideal
- Avoid getting into debt

For each of these broad cultural narratives, you can probably think of many stories that people use and point to in order to back up their beliefs with evidence.

For this assignment, you will choose a broad cultural narrative that people assume is true, a good idea, or perhaps an idea they even take it for granted (e.g., “of course buying a house is a good idea…”). Then, you will use principles of persuasion and argumentation to convince us that, “Hey, this idea that everyone mostly agrees is correct – is actually totally wrong. And here’s why…”

The assignment should be 2 single-spaced pages long. The assignment should cite or incorporate at least 4 principles or examples of persuasion research/knowledge during your analysis/argument.

The keys to this assignment include: picking an interesting topic for your persuasive appeal, incorporating multiple aspects of persuasion knowledge, research and strategies into your argument, and putting in the requisite time toward making this a quality assignment. Creativity and off-the-wall ideas are encouraged. This assignment is purposefully open-ended to allow students the freedom to create and apply their knowledge as best fits their specific interests.
Exams
(4 exams, 40 points each, 160 points total)

Tests and exams are one way to measure your understanding and comprehension of course materials. Exams in this course will consist primarily of multiple-choice questions, but may also include true/false, matching, or essay questions as called for by the situation. Each exam will have a total of 20 questions, with each question worth 2 points (40 points total).

For each exam, all assigned readings and all material covered in lecture should be considered of importance for the exam. Exams are scheduled at the completion of Weeks 4, 7, 10, and 15.

Grading scale:
A: (excellent, clearly outstanding) 270-300 (90-100%)
B: (very good, impressive) 240-269 (80-89%)
C: (average college-level) 210-239 (70-79%)
D: (below average, barely passing) 180-209 (60-69%)
F: (failing) < 180 (0-59%)
# Tracking Your Grade!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exams</strong></td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #1</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #3</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam #4</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In-Class Activities</strong></td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Activities &amp; Quizzes</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Persuasion Analyses</strong></td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion Analysis #1</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion Analysis #2</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasion Analysis #3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counter-Obvious Persuasive Appeal</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>300</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Theories of Persuasion
### Fall 2018 Schedule

### Unit 1: Principles of Persuasion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1    | August 28<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup> | Course Introduction                       | Course Introduction; Syllabus Overview       | Intros & Icebreakers  
  
  George Saunders: *In Persuasion Nation* |
| 2    | September 4<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> | Persuasion & Reciprocity                  |                                               | Reciprocity                                   |
| 3    | September 11<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> | Reciprocity, Consistency & Commitment     | *Cialdini* 1 – 35                            | *Analysis #1, Reciprocity, due September 14<sup>th</sup> at 5pm* |
| 4    | September 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> | Consistency & Commitment                  | *Cialdini* 73-96                             | *Goldstein, Ch. 1, Ch. 19*  
  
  Review for Exam 1 |

Take Exam #1 on Blackboard.  
The exam opens at 2pm on Thursday September 20<sup>th</sup>  
and closes at 11pm on Monday September 24<sup>th</sup>.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>September 25th and 27th</td>
<td>Social Proof &amp; Validation</td>
<td>Cialdini 97 – 120; Goldstein Ch. 2</td>
<td>Cialdini 120 – 140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>October 2nd &amp; 4th</td>
<td>Liking, Attraction, &amp; Similarity</td>
<td>Cialdini 141 – 163</td>
<td>Cialdini, 163-173 Analysis #2, Social Proof, due October 5th at 5pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>October 9th &amp; 11th</td>
<td>Authority &amp; Scarcity</td>
<td>Cialdini 174 – 197</td>
<td>Cialdini 198-226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Take Exam #2 on Blackboard. The exam opens at 2pm on Thursday October 11th and closes at 11pm on Monday October 15th.
## Unit 3: Thinking, Fast & Slow

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>October 16(^{th}) &amp; 18(^{th})</td>
<td>System 1 &amp; 2: Attention &amp; Effort</td>
<td>Kahneman 19-30</td>
<td>Kahneman, 31-38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>October 23(^{rd}) &amp; 25(^{th})</td>
<td>The Lazy Controller; Cognitive Ease</td>
<td>Kahneman, 39-49</td>
<td>Kahneman 59-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>October 30(^{th}) &amp; November 1(^{st})</td>
<td>Prospect Theory</td>
<td>Kahneman, 278-288</td>
<td>Kahneman, 119-128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Analysis #3,**

The Lazy Controller, due November 2\(^{nd}\) at 5pm

---

Take Exam #3 on Blackboard. The exam opens at 2pm on Thursday November 1\(^{st}\) and closes at 11pm on Monday November 5\(^{th}\)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 11   | November 6\(^{th}\) & 8\(^{th}\) | Creative Thinking; Anchors  | But What if We’re Wrong? *Klosterman, Ch. 1*     | No class today  
Dr. McGlynn at Research Conference               |
| 12   | November 13\(^{th}\) & 15\(^{th}\) | Bias & Persuasion           | Anchors; Anchoring Effect  
Anchoring Effect; Primacy & Recency; The Focusing Illusion | Opportunity Costs; Sunk Costs; Logical Fallacies  
*Analysis #4, Counter-Obvious Persuasive Appeal, Due November 16\(^{th}\) at 5pm* |
| 13   | November 20\(^{th}\) & 22\(^{nd}\) | Pre-Suasion                 | Pre-Suasion Cialdini, Chapter 1                  | Happy Thanksgiving!                                |
| 14   | November 27\(^{th}\) & 29\(^{th}\) | Heuristics & Credibility   | Heuristics, Credibility, & Persuasion            | Timing of Requests; Design Aspects of Persuasion; Applications of Persuasion Techniques |
| 15   | December 4\(^{th}\) & 6\(^{th}\) | Time                          | Time & Persuasion                                | No class  
(Reading Day)                                       |

Take Exam #4 on Blackboard.  
The exam opens at 2pm on Thursday December 6\(^{th}\) and closes on Thursday December 13\(^{th}\) at 12:30pm