MMC 6466
Digital Persuasive Communication
Spring 2019

Professor: Kasey Windels, Ph.D.
Class Time/Location: Mondays from 12:50-3:50 in 3020 Weimer
Office: 3059 Weimer Hall
Office Hours: Monday 11:00-12:00; Tuesday 10:30-11:30
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Course Website: Relevant course info will be posted on Canvas.

As an increasing amount of our time is spent with digital technologies, an increasing amount of persuasion is performed through digitally-mediated communication. This course is designed to provide you with a foundation of practically-oriented knowledge on how to use digital media for persuasive communications.

Throughout the semester, we will examine theories of persuasive communication and consider some of the myths we hold about how to persuade others. We will consider how digital media campaigns are used to influence consumers and to drive social change. Finally, we will learn about the strategic planning process for digital persuasion, and we will use that process to engage in our own persuasive messaging campaign through a final project that applies course materials.

Course Objectives

- Deepen our understanding of digital persuasive communication.
  - Consider several theoretical approaches to persuasive communication and influence.
  - Examine new research on the value of rational versus emotional messages.
  - Understand the importance of long-term brand building that generates emotional connections with consumers.
- Develop a thorough understanding of the digital persuasive communication campaign process.
  - Conduct secondary and primary research to understand consumers' relationship with the brand or service.
  - Set realistic communication objectives.
  - Develop a unique message strategy that builds from consumer and brand knowledge.
  - Research users' platform tendencies to develop messaging strategies that understand the space and the consumer.
  - Develop a media strategy that considers how users interact on each platform.
  - Use the creative process to generate a big idea that is novel and relevant.
  - Execute tactics that garner attention, generate emotional connections and accomplish campaign objectives.
- Sharpen the skills necessary to be a communications professional.
  - Work collaboratively as part of a team.
  - Hone critical thinking, creative thinking, persuasion, and presentation skills.
  - Develop a campaign plan that will showcase your work to future employers.

Course Format

Class sessions typically will be divided into two main parts: (1) one hour of discussion of course readings, led by a student discussion leader and (2) one hour of active learning, led by Dr. Windels. The active learning portion of the course will include activities, case studies, and other applications of course materials. The additional 30 minutes in each class will be reserved for case study presentations, as well as wiggle room for additional discussion, lecture, and activities.

Required Materials

- Robert B. Cialdini. *Influence: Science and Practice* (5th ed.). Pearson, 2009.
- All other readings will be uploaded to Canvas.

Assignments

1. **Reaction Paper and Discussion Question:** Each week you are responsible for writing a one-page, single spaced response regarding all of the week's readings, due by Sunday at 3:00. In the reaction paper, you will respond to the readings for the week. You must respond to implied ideas in the reading, plus evaluate and elaborate on the author's main points. These papers will help you to participate in a meaningful discussion during our class time. Do not waste your time summarizing what you read. I will grade these posts and hand them back to you by at the beginning of class so that you may refer to them in during discussion. The reaction paper will be evaluated with a check plus, check, or check minus, indicating either an outstanding (A=97); satisfactory (B=88), or unsatisfactory (C=77) performance. At the end of the reaction paper, you will also write one discussion question pertaining to the reading, which will be used by the week's discussion leader.

   Some topics you may discuss in your reaction paper include the following:
   - Discuss the most important idea(s) from the readings. How do you disagree? Can you reconcile your point of view with the readings?
   - Raise a question relevant to the topic but not answered in the readings: "The author ignored this key issue…"
   - Analyze how one text relates to another text from the same week or from a previous week. Point out similarities and differences. Reconcile with your own point of view.
   - Connect a text to concepts and themes discussed in class.
   - Question key assumptions made by the author.
   - Consider the strengths and weaknesses of the author's argument.
   - Consider how the material could be applied to real-world problems or to another area that interests you.

   You will copy and paste your reaction paper to Canvas by 3:00 Sunday so that the discussion leader for the week can use it for discussion.

2. **Discussion Leadership:** Each student is required to lead one class discussion on the weekly readings. When you are discussion leader, instead of a reaction paper, you will compile and create a list of discussion questions to guide class discussion. You should use the research questions provided by classmates as part of your discussion, but you should add your own questions, add

activities, and organize the discussion as you see fit. You should assume that the class has already read the readings, so your goal is NOT to give a detailed presentation of the readings. The goal is to engage the class in a fruitful discussion and exploration of the topic, so feel free to be creative and use different tools and techniques. You must use 2-4 different pedagogical techniques. Some options are to generate and disseminate a list of questions based on the readings; to present a challenge, puzzle or two opposing viewpoints to spur discussion; to use videos or current events examples to promote discussion; to develop an activity that applies the course material; to find or develop a case study that encourages learning or discussion; to divide the class in half for a debate. You can provide handouts, discussion points, put together a PowerPoint/Keynote, or speak extemporaneously. Your classmates will provide you with feedback on your discussion leadership, as will Dr. Windels. See the rubric on Canvas. You can find additional techniques here: http://www.fctl.ucf.edu/TeachingAndLearningResources/CourseDesign/Assessment/content/101_Tips.pdf.

3. **In-Class Contributions:** As the course is a seminar, class participation is essential—and a substantial part of student grades. In addition to the assignment to lead a discussion, weekly participation will be evaluated with a check plus, check, or check minus, indicating either an outstanding (A=97); satisfactory (B=88), or unsatisfactory (C=77) level of engagement. To earn a "check plus" in participation, I am looking for consistent, active contribution to class activities and discussion that demonstrates a firm grasp of the material covered and adds to the learning of your fellow classmates.

4. **Case Study Presentation:** Choose a case study that showcases an example of excellent digital persuasive communication. Learn about the case study, especially the key problem or objective, target audience, applicable research and insights, the strategy, the concept or big idea, and the tactics of the case. Analyze and evaluate why the case was successful. Present the case to the class. Ideas for cases include: #metoo; #BlackLivesMatter; Dove Campaign for Real Beauty; ALS Ice Bucket Challenge; Arab Spring; Old Spice Man Your Man Could Smell Like Response Campaign; #bringbackourgirls; #yesallwomen; Kony 2012; Occupy Wallstreet; #Ferguson; BK Subservient Chicken; #timesup; #marchforourlives. Assignment and rubric will be posted on Canvas.

5. **Digital Persuasive Communication Campaign:** This is a group project in which you will apply your knowledge and understanding of audiences, persuasion, and digital media to develop a persuasive messaging campaign for a real client or social issue. The deliverable for this project is a ~20 page written campaign plansbook outlining your key problem or objective, target audience, research, insights, strategy, concept or big idea, and tactics. You will also develop a 10-15 minute presentation. Assignment and rubric will be posted on Canvas.

   Peer Evaluation: After completion of the project, each student will complete a peer evaluation of the contributions of yourself and the other members in your group, which accounts for 5% of your total grade. If you do not turn in your group evaluation, you will receive a one-letter-grade deduction on your research report.

   NOTE: Since participation in group projects in critical, I also reserve the right to deduct up to 50% off any individual team member's team research report score if they receive evaluation scores that suggest they did not participate fully in the project.

Grading

- Reaction Papers   20%
- Discussion Leadership   15%
- In-Class Contributions   15%
- Case Study Presentation   10%
- Campaign Book   25%
- Campaign Presentation   10%
- Peer Evaluation   5%

Grading Scale

	93.00 and above = A	90.00 – 92.99 = A-
87.00 – 89.99 = B+	83.00 – 86.99 = B	80.00 – 82.99 = B-
77.00 – 79.99 = C+	73.00 – 76.99 = C	70.00 – 72.99 = C-
67.00 – 69.99 = D+	63.00 – 66.99 = D	60.00 – 62.99 = D-
59.99 and below = E		

Policies & Procedures

- **Classroom Preparedness:** Students should attend all classes and participate in class discussions. Students should complete readings <u>before</u> the class in which they are discussed. Finally, students should check email and Canvas frequently for the latest class information and updates.
- **Attendance:** As a graduate-level course, your attendance and punctuality are expected each week. If you are going to miss class, please contact me **beforehand** to make other arrangements. In order to receive an excused absence, you must let me know you will miss class **BEFORE** the class meets except in certain (rare) emergency situations. Explain why you will not be in class, and bring in a written documentation to verify your excuse when you come back to class. Make sure to make a photocopy of the documentation if you need it for other classes.

  Excused absences include: Religious holidays (only the holiday). Documented, dated, necessary medical excuse or official documented legal excuse (a dated doctor's note or prescription). The Student Health Center will provide you a specific kind of note that indicates they think you should've missed class or will need to miss additional days. University competitive events (that means athletes).

  The following is a partial list of the types of situations that are **NOT** considered excused absences: Social events, meetings, entertaining out-of-town guests, holiday/travel plans, weddings, etc.

- **Respect for Others' Ideas:** Appropriate and professional classroom conduct is expected at all times. Respect and common courtesy toward your classmates and your professor are required. Effective communication relies on the ability to recognize and embrace diversity in all its forms, including viewpoints. Be respectful of the diverse range of opinions of everyone in the class,

and help make this an inclusive environment. See the CJC diversity statement for more information: https://www.jou.ufl.edu/home/about/diversity-statement/.

- **Honor Code:** Please review the UF Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code, which can be found at: https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/. Any violation of the codes will be reported to the proper University administrators and may result in other sanctions.

- **Plagiarism:** Original writing is essential to ethical communication, and it is also essential for this class. Cheating is any action that violates University norms or an instructor's guidelines for the preparation and submission of assignments. Such actions may include using or providing unauthorized assistance or materials on course assignments or possessing unauthorized materials during an exam.

  Plagiarism involves the representation of another's work as your own, for example: (a) Submitting as one's own any material that is copied from published or unpublished sources such as the Internet, print sources, or video programs without proper acknowledgement that it is someone else's. (b) Paraphrasing another's views, opinions or insights without proper acknowledgement or copying of any source in whole or in part with only minor changes in wording or syntax even with acknowledgement. (c) Submitting as one's own work a report, examination, paper, computer file, lab report or other assignment which has been prepared by someone else. (d) Presenting work created for another course as original work in this class.

  UF requires faculty who find evidence of plagiarism to submit a report to Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution. Please read the UF Student Honor Code for more information.

- **Effective Writing and Presentation Skills:** Your written communication is expected to be clear and concise. I will grade you on your ideas as well as on grammar, syntax, spelling and other writing mechanics. Be sure to proofread all papers and presentations carefully. Presentation skills are another important component of communication. We will have class assignments that focus on presentation skills and delivery. I will specify a time limit for each presentation. You must observe these limits. Plan and rehearse the material.

- **Professional Credibility:** There are certain egregious errors that signify to a client or superior that you have not given adequate attention to your assignment. One example of an egregious error is misspelling the client's name. Another is misrepresenting facts about the client. Agencies get fired on the spot for these types of errors. You will receive a two-letter-grade reduction.

- **Professional Execution:** You should execute and present your ideas as if you were pitching to a client or boss. You can choose the tools (Photoshop, InDesign, PPT, Prezi, etc.), but the key is to develop professional work.

- **Technology/Paying Attention**: I prefer that you take hand-written notes in class and keep your laptops closed to avoid distraction. Research shows that we learn and remember more from handwriting our notes. Also, when we're distracted rather than engaged, we can't improve as

professionals. No text messaging/social media/web surfing during class. If you do this you will be asked to stop. If you continue, you will be asked to leave.

- **Grade Challenges:** Grades will not be discussed via email, the telephone or in class. If you disagree with a grade given on any assignment, you must appeal the grade in person during my office hours or in an appointment with me. In this appeal, you must clearly state the problem and give a clear, concise explanation as to why you feel the grade is inaccurate. You must appeal assigned grades within two weeks of your receiving that particular grade. After two weeks, all grades are final.

- **E-mail Policy:** As e-mail has become a favored way to communicate in academia and industry, you must learn to use it appropriately. Thus, when e-mailing me, address me formally. I will generally return it within 24 hours of receiving it on weekdays or by Monday evening if I receive it on the weekend. If you need to discuss something in length, come see me during office hours or we can schedule an alternative time.

- **Students with Disabilities:** Students with disabilities can receive accommodations. The first step is to contact the Disability Resource Center (352-329-8565; www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/). Once you receive your accommodation letter, provide a copy to the professor as early as possible in the semester.

- **Course Evaluations:** Students in this class are participating in a new course evaluation system that is designed to be more informative to instructors and is integrated into Canvas. Note that your other courses may still use the current GatorRater system at https://evaluations.ufl.edu.

- **Counseling and Wellness Center:** Your well-being is important to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

- **Tentative Nature of the Syllabus:** I reserve the right to change and/or add readings throughout the semester. Furthermore, I reserve the right to change and or move around scheduled lectures in order to facilitate for potential unplanned events. If changes in the schedule are necessary, students will be held responsible for such changes, which will be announced in class ahead of time.

	Topic / *Key Question*	**Assignments &** *-Readings*	*-Active Learning*
1/7	Course Intro and Intro to Influence	*-Instagram Influence* *-Fake Sponsored Content* *-Psychological Weapons of Mass Persuasion*	-Key points worksheet on readings

1/14	The Strategic Planning Process
	
	What are the steps in the digital persuasive communications strategic planning process?
		Discussion Leader 11
		-eMarketing Ch. 17
		-Newcastle Case: If We Made It
		Choose two of the following:
		  -Hootsuite: Social Media Strategy
		  -Sprout Social: Social Media Strategy
		  -Sendible: Social Media Strategy
			-Case study: Old Spice
			-Brainstorm final project

1/21	**MLK Holiday**		

1/28	Gathering Insights
	
	What kinds of research help us to make good strategic decisions for digital persuasive communication?
		Discussion Leader 1
		Case Study 5
		-Advertising Research Ch. 5: Secondary Research
		-Advertising Strategy Ch. 5: Competitive Insight
		-Advertising Research Ch. 9: Qualitative Research
		Choose one of the following:
		  -Hootsuite: What is Social Listening?
		  -SproutSocial: What is Social Listening?
		Choose one of the following:
		  -Hootsuite: How to Conduct a Social Media Audit
		  -SproutSocial: How to Perform a Social Media Audit
		  -NeilPatel: How to Conduct a Social Media Audit
			-Library resources
			-Qualitative practice
			-Crimson Hexagon

2/4	Understanding Digital Platforms
	
	How do we choose our digital platforms?
	
	Which media platforms should we use? When? How?
		Discussion Leader 2
		Case Study 4
		-Marketo: Choosing the Right Social Media Platform
		-Effective Social Strategy Report
		-Understanding Customer Experience Through the Customer Journey
		Choose two of the following:
		  -Hubspot: Customer Journey Map
		  -ConversionXL: Customer Journey Map
		  -NG Data: Customer Journey Map
		  -Invesp: Customer Journey Map
			-W+K digital strategist application

2/11	Branding *What is branding and how are brands built?*	**Discussion Leader 3** **Case Study 9** *-Brands and Branding: Research Findings and Future Priorities* *-Brand Purpose Report: Lessons from 2017 WARC Awards* *-What we know about brand positioning* *-What we know about brand identity and image* *-How to design in today's fragmented media mix*	-TBD
2/18	The Myth of the Rational Consumer	**Discussion Leader 4** **Case Study 10** *-Kahneman: Ch. 1-2: System 1 and System 2*	-Brainstorm: Decrease discrimination (no label)

	Why do we assume that rational arguments are the way to persuade? *Should we think about branding in the short or long term?*	*-Emotions and Feelings: Drivers of Consumer Behavior* *-Brands Need Building* *-The Persuasion Code Ch. 4* *-Demasio Video 1* *-Demasio Video 2*	
2/25	Social Change	**Discussion Leader 5** **Case Study 6 & 11** *-Stop Raising Awareness Already* *-How Change Happens Intro* *-How Change Happens Ch. 3*	-Brainstorm: Salvation Army and/or Food Bank
3/4	**Spring Break**		
3/11	Strategy *How do we make informed decisions?*	**Discussion Leader 6** **Case Study 1** *-The Creative Search for an Insight (JA)* *-The Chop Shop Theory of Strategy and Planning*	-Activities on strategy and backwards brief
3/18	Theoretical Approaches *What theory can guide our thinking?*	**Discussion Leader 7** **Case Study 2** *-Personalization (Dig Rsrch and Theory- Ch. 7)* *-Attention (Dig Research and Theory- Ch. 9)* *-Customer engagement (Pansari and Kumar 2016)* *-Resisting Advertising (Fransen et al 2015)* *-The Science of What Makes People Care*	-Work time in class
3/25	The Creative Process *How do we come up with amazing ideas?*	**Discussion Leader 8** **Case Study 3** *-Cutting Edge Advertising Ch. 5* *-AdTeachings eBook on Idea Generation*	-Creative process activity -Mind map -Strategy to Idea
4/1	Copy and Visuals *How do we get people to pay attention to our ideas?*	**Discussion Leader 9** **Case Study 7** *-Hey Whipple Ch. 4* *-AdTeachings eBook on Writing Headlines* *-Advertising by Design Ch. 8: Typography and Visualization* *-Advertising by Design Ch. 9: Composition*	-Headline writing activities
4/8	Social Influence Principles *How do we influence people?*	**Discussion Leader 10** **Case Study 8** *-Cialdini Ch. 1-7*	Apply each concept to the digital environment, apply to final project
4/15	Work Day	Work day in class	Work day
4/22	Final Presentations / Wrap Up		

URLs for Linked Readings (all non-PDFs)

Instagram Influence: https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2016-11-30/confessions-of-an-instagram-influencer

Fake Sponsored Content: https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/12/influencers-are-faking-brand-deals/578401/

Psychological Weapons of Mass Persuasion: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/psychological-weapons-of-mass-persuasion/

Hootsuite: Social Media Strategy: https://blog.hootsuite.com/how-to-create-a-social-media-marketing-plan/

SproutSocial: Social Media Strategy: https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-marketing-strategy/

Sendible: Social Media Strategy: https://www.sendible.com/insights/social-media-plan

Hootsuite: What is Social Listening? https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-listening-business/

SproutSocial: What is Social Listening? https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-listening/

SproutSocial: How to Perform a Social Media Audit https://sproutsocial.com/insights/social-media-audit/

Hootsuite: How to Conduct a Social Media Audit https://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-audit-template/

NeilPatel: How to Conduct a Social Media Audit https://neilpatel.com/blog/social-media-audit/

Hubspot: Customer Journey Map: https://blog.hubspot.com/service/customer-journey-map

ConversionXL: Customer Journey Map: https://conversionxl.com/blog/customer-journey-maps/

NGData: Customer Journey Map: https://www.ngdata.com/how-to-create-a-customer-journey-map/

Invesp: Customer Journey Map: https://www.invespcro.com/blog/six-steps-to-creating-the-complete-customer-journey-maps/

Demasio Video 1: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wup_K2WN0I&t=110s

Demasio Video 2: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aw2yaozi0Gg

Stop Raising Awareness Already: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/stop_raising_awareness_already

The Science of What Makes People Care: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_science_of_what_makes_people_care