



**MMC 6936**  
**Digital Persuasive Communication (#0961)**  
**Spring 2016**

College of Journalism and Communications  
University of Florida

Class Meeting: M 6-8 (12:50-3:50 p.m.), Weimer Hall 1074  
Professor: Dr. Eunice Kim  
Email: [eunicekim@jou.ufl.edu](mailto:eunicekim@jou.ufl.edu)  
Office: Weimer Hall 2084, (352)392-5059  
Office Hours: M 4-5 (10:40-12:35 p.m.) or by appointment

### Course Description

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Welcome to Digital Persuasive Communication! This course acquaints graduate students with the some of the more well-accepted literature in digital persuasive communication and provides the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge to understanding the psychology of persuasion in digital media environments. This course will deal with a wide range of persuasion issues and topics in the area of communication in the digital age (e.g., consumer-generated content, electronic word-of-mouth, social media marketing and public relations, virtual world, and in-game advertising/advergaming). We will examine a body of communication literature in the digital context and discuss its application to a variety of persuasion practices.

Specific objectives of this course are:

- To provide students an opportunity to carefully examine the academic literature and theories that have applications to advertising, marketing communication, and public relations in the context of digital media.
- To have students critically analyze and construct critical viewpoints of theory and research in the field of digital persuasive communication.
- To help students translate theoretical concepts to practical applications in digital persuasion settings.
- To develop students' critical thinking and research skills through writing research papers.
- To give students practice in defending their research against criticism from their colleagues.

### Readings

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- There is no textbook assigned for this class, however individuals are responsible for the readings that will be posted on Canvas (<https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>) under "Reading List".

## Expectations

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This course is designed around a discussion format—meaning it is a **discussion-intensive class**. You are expected to arrive in class having completed the readings assigned for each week and be ready to *actively participate and engage* in class discussion. The most valuable contributions will be your scholarly opinions and your efforts to synthesize and apply course readings.

A lively discussion among classmates is crucial to the success of any graduate-level course. You should be prepared to state and defend your position, as well as refute the position of others in a cogent manner. I hope you also develop supportive relationships with your classmates as we work through the issues in the field.

## Evaluation

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Your grade in this course will be based on the following components:

Participation/Discussion Leader	30%
Reading Synopsis	20%
Journal Review	10%
<u>Research Assignments</u>	<u>40%</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

### 1. Participation/Discussion Leader (30%)

Each week, 2-3 papers will be assigned. You are expected to read each paper carefully **BEFORE** class. Your aim, in reading the assigned papers, should be on recalling information from the papers and integrating the information into the class discussion.

Every student will be asked to take the role of the “**lead discussant**” for a particular article. The article will be assigned in advance. As the lead discussant, you will have to highlight the main objective and a summary of the article and point out what you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of the reading. In addition, the discussion leader will be responsible for generating discussion points/agendas for class to stimulate class conversation. If you wish, you may use PowerPoint to help lead the discussion, but remember that the class should be a “discussion” and not a “presentation”.

Everyone is expected to participate thoughtfully during each class session. A major part of your class participation grade will be determined by (1) your ability to thoughtfully discuss the papers and contribute *meaningfully* to class discussions and (2) your performance in the role as the lead discussant.

## 2. Reading Synopsis (20%)

Throughout the semester you will be expected to demonstrate your grasp of assigned reading materials and to contribute to discussion relating the relevance of class readings to current persuasive communication practices using digital media. Specifically, on designated weeks (see the Preliminary Course Schedule on pages 7-8), you are expected to turn in synopsis of **(1) key points in the readings and (2) two questions on one or more of the papers assigned for that week.** Please email your reading synopsis (a Word file) to me **no later than 10 p.m. the Sunday before class.**

These questions should be thoughtful – going beyond definitional issues or areas of confusion. The questions may attempt to make links between the readings for the week or try to tie the current week's topic with topics covered in other weeks. They may pertain to a specific connection you see between the article and a personal observation and/or another article. In short, the questions could be on any topic, so long as they are related to the readings, and indicate that you have spent time and effort to understand and digest the information in the readings.

## 3. Journal Review (10%)

Each student will complete a formal review of a recent article published in a peer-review journal. The review should include clear, detailed, and constructive comments on how the author(s) may improve. When making comments, be clear in identifying the strengths, weaknesses, and ways to make improvements – more specificity is better. Here are examples of topics you might address in the review:

- What is the significance of the study to the academia and/or practice in digital persuasive communication?
  - Present the most critical issues from the article. What contrasting positions might be taken? Are these positions incompatible or can they be reconciled?
  - Criticize a theoretical position – what has it clarified, ignored, confused, etc.
  - Point out methodological problems. Suggest alternative explanations for the findings.
  - Raise question(s) relevant to the topic but not answered in the article.
- **Due: February 22<sup>nd</sup>**
- Format: double-spaced, no more than 4 pages, 12-point Times New Roman; hard copy in class.

#### 4. Research Assignments (40%)

Two written research assignments (research paper) and a presentation will be required for this group portion of your class assignment (for Ph.D students, these assignments should be done **individually**). The research assignments can be on any topic of your choice relevant to digital persuasive communication. Early in the semester you will be asked to choose a topic of your interest. Topic choice must be approved by me in advance in writing (**due on February 15<sup>th</sup>, double-spaced, 2-page, 12-point Times New Roman; hard copy in class**).

A thorough review of the literature and research questions should be included in the final paper (for Ph.D. students, specific hypotheses and detailed research methods should be included). The goal for this final paper is that you leave the class with a paper that could be submitted to a conference in the future (e.g., AEJMC, ICA, AAA, NCA, etc.). Here are some guidelines to help you get started:

##### Part 1: Research Questions and Background Information (15%)

- Pick a general topic area and research question(s) relevant to digital persuasive communication. Provide your rationale for why this is an important topic to study and discuss the likely contribution(s) of the proposed research.
- Do a general search of the literature in the topic area. Summarize literature relevant to your study, which will provide the foundation for your final paper.
- Turn in a paper based on Part 1 specified above (**due on March 21<sup>st</sup>, email submission**)
- **Double-spaced, no more than 10 pages, 12-point Times New Roman (excluding reference section, tables, and figures) in APA style.**

##### Part 2: Theoretical Explanations (25%)

- Expand on the above with additional literature review.
- Describe what the key theories are and provide detailed theoretical explanations relevant to a possible “answer” to your research question(s).
- Deliver a 15-minute professional presentation on the last day of class combining Parts 1 & 2 specified above (**April 18<sup>th</sup>**).
- Turn in a final paper containing Parts 1 & 2 specified above (**due on Monday April 25<sup>th</sup>, email submission and hard copy in my mailbox**): **double-spaced, no more than 25 pages, 12-point Times New Roman (excluding reference section, tables, and figures) in APA style.**

##### Methodology (for Ph.D. students only)

- Describes the research design with the quantitative and/or quantitative method of your selection, including: subjects, procedure, measurement of variables, stimuli, and manipulation checks etc.

## General Course Policies

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### Attendance

Your attendance is expected each week. Failure to attend on more than three occasions will result in your course grade being substantially lowered, or your dismissal from the course, at the instructor's discretion.

### Late Work Policy

**NO** late assignments will be accepted. No exception.

### 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 it 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.

### Professional Courtesy

As a courtesy to your instructor and to your classmates, please make sure at the beginning of each class period that **your cell phones and other electronic devices are turned OFF**. In-class laptop usage is **prohibited**. Students who text, email, etc during class will be asked to leave and be considered absent for that day.

### Academic Dishonesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." By accepting this syllabus, you have agreed to these guidelines and must adhere to them. The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conducthonor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.

Please see the plagiarism document in the Graduate Division, and be sure that you have signed it and it is on file (required, if you are in this college).

### **Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Religious Holy Days**

By UF policy, a student who misses classes or other required activities for the observance of a religious holy day must notify me of his or her pending absence as early as possible prior to the date of a religious holy day, so that arrangements can be made to complete an assignment or activity within a reasonable time after the absence.

### **Online Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last 2-3 weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

### **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 (cancellations or guest speakers). If changes in the schedule are necessary, students will be held responsible for such changes, which will be announced in class ahead of time.

**PRELIMINARY COURSE SCHEDULE**

*The course outline is subject to change*

(\* indicates individual reading synopsis due in class)

**Week 1:**

1/11- Welcome & Course Intro

**Week 2:**

1/18- Martin Luther King Day – No CLASS

**Week 3:**

1/25- Digital Persuasive Communication – Overview, Opportunities, and Challenges

**Week 4:**

2/1- Customization and Interactivity\*

**Week 5:**

2/8- User-Generated Content and Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM)\*

**Week 6:**

2/15- Understanding Social Media Use

➤ *Research Proposal Due*

**Week 7:**

2/22- Engagement via Social Media\*

➤ *Journal Review Due*

**Week 8:**

2/29- Spring Break – No Class

**Week 9:**

3/7- Social Media Behavior - Self-Presentation & Self-Disclosure\*

**Week 10:**

3/14- Social Media Behavior- Culture & Personality\*

**Week 11:**

**3/21- Research Paper Consultation**

- *Research Paper Part 1 Due*

**Week 12:**

**3/28- Persuasion in Virtual Environments**

**Week 13:**

**3/28- In-Game Advertising & Advergimes\***

**Week 14:**

**4/11- Resisting Persuasion**

**Week 15:**

**4/18- Final Presentations**

**Note: Final Paper Due on Monday April 25<sup>th</sup>**