

# MMC 6466

## Digital Persuasive Communication

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Monday: Period 7-9 (1:55 PM - 4:55 PM)

Office Hours: 1:45p - 2:45 on Tuesday in person & Wednesday via Zoom (<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/92842962033>)

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### Course Description:

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 persuasive communication that can be used in digital and traditional contexts.

Throughout the semester, we will examine the persuasive communication process and consider some of the myths we hold about how to persuade others. Our initial focus will be on messaging and persuasion. Later, we will consider how digital media campaigns are used to influence consumers. Throughout the semester, we will engage in our own persuasive messaging campaign that applies course materials.

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### Course Objectives

1. Deepen our understanding of 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.
2. Develop a thorough understanding of the 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.
  - Use the creative process to generate a big idea that is novel and relevant.
  - Understand the digital ecosystem and how to use it for persuasive communication.
  - Develop a media strategy that considers how users interact on each platform.
  - Execute tactics that garner attention, generate emotional connections and accomplish campaign objectives.
3. 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 Materials

- **Required:** Morrison, Haley, Sheehan, Taylor. *Using Qualitative Research in Advertising* (2nd ed.). Sage, 2012.
- All other readings will be uploaded to Canvas

## Assignments

### 1. Reaction Paper and Discussion Question:

Each week you are responsible for writing an approximately 200-word response regarding the week's readings, uploaded to Canvas by Monday at 1:00. In the **reaction paper**, you will respond to the readings for the week. For **at least two of the readings** for that week, you will (1) highlight a main point from the reading and (2) react to that point. This reaction might involve:

- Analyze how the main point relates to another reading from the same week or from a previous week. Point out similarities and differences. Reconcile with your own point of view.
- Consider how the main point could be applied to real-world problems, to your own research or work interests, or to another area that interests you.
- Note how the main point is related to your life, experiences, ideas or problems.
- Discuss whether the point changes your perspective in any way.
- Discuss how the author's perspective is different than yours. What struck you about that? How is that significant?
- Raise a question relevant to the topic but not answered in the readings: "The author ignored this key issue..."
- 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.

At the end of the reaction paper, you will also write one **discussion question** that will provoke interesting in-class discussion. Some ideas for the types of topics to discuss include: delving deeper into a particular research area, exploring the evidence the authors provide for their conclusions, questioning the author's assumptions, expanding on an implication of the study, or exploring the implications of this particular study for understanding of different disciplinary areas or for how the research could be applied in a variety of different capacities. Please **do not** include the following discussion question or its related counterparts, "Can you think of an example of an ad that contains (topic from the reading)?"

These papers will help you to participate in a meaningful discussion during our class time. The reaction paper will be evaluated with a check plus, check, or check minus, indicating either an outstanding (A=97); satisfactory (B=87), or unsatisfactory (C=77) performance. You will receive a zero if you do not turn it in.

**2. Plansbook Critique:** As a primer on the campaign plansbook and its parts, you will work with a team to critique a campaign plansbook. You will examine it section by section to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the plansbook. Your team will turn in a written evaluation.

**3. In-Class Contributions:** As the course is a seminar, class participation is essential—and a substantial part of student grades. Your grade for in-class contributions will be based on two factors: (1) your consistent, active contribution to in-class discussion and activities, which should demonstrate a firm grasp of the material covered and (2): your contribution to your team when we break out into groups, including whether you participate actively, communicate your points professionally, and work with your team for the full duration of the class period. Weekly participation will be evaluated with a check plus, check, or check minus, indicating either an outstanding (A=97); satisfactory (B=87), or unsatisfactory (C=77) level of engagement. You will receive a zero for unexcused absences.

**“The best way to persuade people is with your ears... by listening to them.”**

**- Dean Rusk**

**4. Drafts of Persuasive Communication Campaign:** You will work with your team on the final campaign project throughout the semester, with drafts of several parts of the project due. The drafts help ensure your team is on the right track and working on the project throughout the semester at a good pace. They also allow you to receive feedback from the professor. The drafts will be graded.

**5. Final 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 15-20 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 final campaign book grade.

**NOTE:** Since participation in group projects is 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

### Course Grade Breakdown

- 65% Group Persuasive Communication Campaign
  - 5% Situation Analysis Draft
  - 5% Qualitative Methods and Findings Draft
  - 5% Message Strategy Draft
  - 5% Creative Concept Draft
  - 30% Final Campaign Book
  - 10% Final Campaign Presentation
  - 5% Peer Evaluation
- 10% Reaction Papers
- 15% In-Class Contributions (discussion & group)
- 10% Plansbook Critique

### Course Grading Scheme

A	100% to 94%	C	76.99% to 74%
A-	93.99% to 90%	C-	73.99% to 70%
B+	89.99% to 87%	D+	69.99% to 67%
B	86.99% to 84%	D	66.99% to 64%
B-	83.99% to 80%	D-	69.99% to 61%
C+	79.99% to 77%	E	60.99% to 0%

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

## Course Policies & Procedures

### Attendance

**Attendance is mandatory.** As a graduate-level course, your attendance and punctuality are expected each week. You will earn a zero for your in-class participation for any day in which you have an unexcused absence. If you are going to miss class for an excused absence, you must let me know you will miss class (and why) **BEFORE** the class meets except in certain (rare) emergency situations.

Excused absences include religious holidays (on the holiday), jury duty, and medical/health issues. Unexcused absences include social events, entertaining out-of-town guests, holiday/travel plans, weddings, etc. Refer to the UF attendance policy on excused absences here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

**“The best way to  
People are generally  
better persuaded by  
the reasons which  
they have themselves  
discovered than by  
those which have  
come into the mind  
of others.”**

**- Blaise Pascal**

### Class Format

**In-Person Course:** Our course is an in-person course. Lecture, discussion and activities exams will occur in the classroom. You are responsible for getting notes from a classmate if you are unable to attend class.

**Professionalism:** In this course, you will be regarded as professionals, and a high level of engagement and active participation during class is expected. Students are required to conduct themselves with professionalism and respect at all times. Disrespectful behavior towards classmates or guest speakers will not be tolerated, and students may be asked to leave the class if such behavior is observed. Being asked to leave class will be considered as an absence for the day. Your commitment to maintaining a positive and professional learning environment is crucial for the success of the course.

**Classroom Preparedness:** Students should attend all classes and participate in class discussions. Students should complete readings before the class in which they are discussed. Finally, students should check email and Canvas frequently for the latest class information and updates.

**Group Work in Class:** In-person, face-to-face communication is a learning outcome of this course and an important part of working in persuasive communications industries. As such, we will have some class time allotted to working on the group project. During that time, you and your team are expected to work on and converse about your project for the full length allotted during class. If you leave early or don't communicate with your team, your in-class contributions score will be lowered. If your whole team leaves early, every member of your team will receive a lower in-class contribution score for the day.

**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 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:** I will generally return emails within 24 hours of receiving it. If you need to discuss something in length, come see me during office hours or we can schedule an alternative time.

**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 different viewpoints. Be respectful of the diverse range of opinions of everyone in the class, and help make this an inclusive environment.

**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, Illustrator, Canva, Powerpoint, etc.), but the key is to develop professional work. If you choose to use AI to create any content, you will need to disclose what software you used and how you used it.

**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/](http://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 are expected to provide professional and constructive feedback on the quality of instruction via the online course evaluation system, GatorEvals. You will be notified when the evaluation period begins, and you can find GatorEvals through your Canvas course menu.

**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 you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto: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.

**Recording the Professor:** Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session.

Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

**Proposed Schedule** (Schedule below will change if needed. Please refer to Canvas for the most updated and detailed schedule)

8/26	Course Intro and The Strategic Planning Process
9/2	No class, UF Holiday
9/9	Persuasive Communication
9/16	Qualitative Research for Consumer Insights
9/23	Qualitative Research and Analysis
9/30	Strategic Messaging
10/7	The Creative Process
10/14	Copy and Visuals
10/21	Understanding Digital Platforms
10/28	Understanding Digital Persuasive Communication
11/4	Work Day
11/11	No class, UF Holiday
11/18	Final Presentations
11/25	No class, UF Holiday
12/2	Final Class wrap up