

COMS 613: Communication and Persuasion

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►► Texts

R. H. Gass & J. S. Seiter, Persuasion, Social Influence, and Compliance Gaining (GS)
M. Allen & R. W. Preiss, Persuasion: Advances through Meta-Analysis (AP)

►► Objective

We will investigate persuasion in three broad areas: (1) social science research as it relates to influencing thought and behavior; (2) the role of propaganda; and (3) the role of the visual in relation to persuasive influence. A central issue will be the relationship between theory and application--what does a theory "do" in aiding understanding, or serving as a frame of reference for evaluating attempts to influence beliefs, attitudes, and values? Attendance will be expected, especially given the brief number of times we are together. However, if there are unavoidable conflicts that occur, an e-mail note or phone message will suffice.

►► Tentative Schedule

Date	Readings
<u>6/14</u>	M Orientation to Persuasion GS 1, 2 When is Persuasion Ethical?? GS 16
<u>6/16</u>	W Considering Persuasion/Ethics GS 1, 2, 16
<u>6/17</u>	TH Attitude Change GS 3, 4
<u>6/21</u>	M Attitude Change AP 13, 8
<u>6/23</u>	W The Speaker - Credibility, GS 5, 6 Ethics Paper Due
<u>6/24</u>	TH Credibility, Persuasibility AP 9, 11
<u>6/28</u>	M Propaganda and Persuasion GS 14
<u>6/23</u>	W Propaganda II
<u>7/1</u>	TH Visual and other Persuasive forms GS 15 Take Home Exam Out
<u>7/5</u>	M Visual II
<u>7/7</u>	W Comformity/Symbolic Comm. GS 7, 8, 9; AP 6, 10, 12
<u>7/8</u>	TH Structure Compliance GS 10, 11 Take Home Exam Due
<u>7/12</u>	M Structure/Compliance AP 2, 5, 7
<u>7/14</u>	W Myriad Strategies GS 12,13; AP 3, 4
<u>7/15</u>	TH Oral Report on Paper (informal status discussion)
<u>7/21</u>	W Paper Due [no PR's will be granted; if not handed in by Aug. 9, 'missing' materials will be factored in as of Aug. 16 and a final grade determined]

➤➤ Revised Schedule - INCO 613 - Lasher

- 7/7 W Conformity/Symbolic Comm. GS 7, 8, 9
- 7/8 TH Conformity - Symbolic Comm AP 6, 10, 12
Thoughts for day – optional
- 7/12 M Take Home Exam Due if not handed in by 7/9
Structure/Compliance GS 10, 11
Thoughts for day - optional
- 7/14 W Structure/Compliance AP 2, 5, 7
Thoughts for day - optional
- 7/15 TH Myriad Strategies GS 12, 13; AP 3, 4
Oral Report on Paper (informal status discussion; hand in a short para. summarizing status, intent – what would you want me to know if I were asked for assistance/advice?)
- 7/21 W Ideally, Paper Due [no PR's will be granted]
Final Dates: If not handed in by Aug. 9, 'missing' materials will be factored in as of Aug. 16 and a final grade determined

➤➤ Course Assignments

1. Exam: One take-home exam (30%).
2. Thoughts for the day:
For each class period beyond the initial class, come with either a handwritten or typed page with at least two or more of the following kinds of "entries": (1) a question regarding the treatment of a specific concept or theory; (2) a thought that runs counter to text-based observations regarding a specific example, concept, term, or theory; (3) an illustration of one of the points made in the reading (from family, friends, watching tv, or other source that helps to apply a term, concept or theory; (4) a reference to a 'show and tell' item (adv., video clip, etc.) that illustrates a relevant point in the reading. The purpose is threefold: to engage you in thinking about how the material applies to your own life experience/situation; to facilitate interaction during the class sessions (via small group and class discussion); and to add to the overall knowledge base for the course. The entries will be handed in at the close of the day's session; we may not get to all of the specific issues or examples contained in any one weekly entry. Those we don't get to may be targeted for discussion at the beginning of the next class. (20%)
3. Ethics in persuasion paper:
Based on class lecture and discussion, write a brief 4-5 page paper on what constitutes ethical persuasion in your personal setting. Specifically: What is your ethical threshold (the line you would draw with reference to ethical versus unethical attempts to persuade you)? When considering interpersonal, social situations, as opposed to public (e.g., political) persuasion, under what conditions might a persuasive attempt be unethical? The essay will integrate terms/concepts discussed in class and advance a specific position on where you draw the line between ethical and unethical attempts at interpersonal influence. You can draw on real or fictional

illustrations to make your position clear; you can construct a narrative tale to make your point. A major criterion: does your paper show evidence of having thought through and used relevant concepts in clarifying your view of ethical persuasion? (20%)

4. Research Report/Paper (30%)

1) **Option1:** With primary attention given to concepts and theories select a topic you are interested in; the task is to locate the latest research, going beyond that in the texts, that focuses on the topic selected ; the quantity collected will vary -- it may be a review of one or more recent book-length studies, or it may involve 7-12 or more journal studies. The paper will not be a traditional "state of the art" research essay -- instead, it will serve to summarize, in bullet or other fashion, the relevant findings from the studies examined -- in a style that would be useful to others who might later want to investigate specific studies for relevant materials. This may also be a 'joint' project of two or three people – with the proviso that the amount of information obtained grows proportional to the size of the group.

2) **Option2:** With primary attention given to the discussion of Visual Persuasion, select a topic that you are able to relate to political or social uses of persuasion, to advertising, sales, information campaigns, or to other issues presented in class. The goal is to focus attention on the manner in which persuasive messages in the visual realm are utilized to convey attitudes and/or effect actions within society. Beyond presenting information in a descriptive fashion, the paper should contain a clear argument--what is your interpretation of the manner in which the message is constructed and relayed to an audience? The number of items to examine will vary depending on the topic chosen, but the expectation would be for a more formal 12-15 page paper. [Note: I realize the time frame for this one is much shorter – if selected, we can work with a firm 'delayed due date' if necessary].

OPTION 3: With primary attention given to the discussion of Propaganda, select a topic that you are able to relate to political uses of persuasion in the past or present (e.g., historical analysis of how propaganda was used; a prime resource is J. Michael Sproule. Propaganda and democracy : the American experience of media and mass persuasion New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 1997.). The number of items to examine will vary depending on the topic chosen, but the expectation would be for a more formal 12-15 page paper. [Note: I realize the time frame for this one is much shorter – if selected, we can work with a firm 'delayed due date' if necessary].

3) **Resources:** Beyond using the text as an initial resource for topics, check professional [academic] journals such as the Communication Monographs, Human Communication Research, Western J. of Communication, Communication Studies, Communication Quarterly, and volumes of Communication Yearbooks.

4) **Session Format:** While subject to change as needs dictate, the general approach will be to mix lecture with class/small group interaction. During the last hour or so each evening, we will devote time to organizing for the next session; for those working on research projects for the degree, we can use some of this time to talk as appropriate or needed.

➤➤ Grading Criteria for Written Work: ESSAYS, RESEARCH PAPERS, IN-CLASS EXAM RESPONSES [ALSO FOR IN-CLASS SPEECHES]

- F Answer reveals you really have no clue what is going on, or are so carelessly inattentive to matters of style as to write an incomprehensible response.
- D Answer reveals less than adequate understanding of theory, concept, or other relevant information. Answer may also misapply concept, use an inappropriate or weak example in attempting to clarify an explanation, or may ramble on in the hope that something will eventually hit the intended target. Answer also may be more or less on target, but carelessly or sloppily written/proofed.
- C Answer provides an on-target recitation of the correct material from the text or other sources being consulted. Answer meets the basic expectations with respect to number of outside sources, or other conditions of a specific assignment. The writing, while clear and comprehensible, is otherwise non-exceptional, or gives evidence of inattention to basic matters of grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- B Answer is not only on-target, but is written in a clear, well-organized style, with few errors (and indicates attention given to correcting spelling or punctuation mistakes). In addition, examples illustrate thought beyond recall or recitation of a text's commentary and adds to the overall understanding of the theory, concept, or other materials being evaluated. There is evidence of having gone beyond the text to consult other sources of information that might be relevant.
- A Answer goes beyond that required for a "B" response to indicate critical analysis, offering evidence of a cogent, well-reasoned defense of a position or argument that is advanced relative to the object under consideration. In other words, the answer reveals a clear authorial voice in command of the material. In addition, the style is elegant, indicating careful attention to presenting a well-constructed, well-thought-out response that advances understanding, stimulates thought or is otherwise evidence of exceptional thinking. Note: These standards apply as general guidelines for the evaluation of assigned papers, essays, etc. [for speeches, simply read as if one were presenting report orally]. As should be clear, inattention to matters of style/format will result in a corresponding decrease in a grade, even when content is otherwise clear and on-target. As a further explanation of these criteria, consider the following comments: A "C" answer is a good answer -- it simply does not do any more than is being asked. A "B" answer is a better answer, but does not reveal depth of analysis that would be required to be considered exceptional. An "A" is an exceptional piece of work. Simply understanding the material is not the equivalent of an "A."