Persuasion and Social Influence (MEJO 811.1)   **Spring 2024**

Day, time, & location	In-person meetings, Wednesdays, 9:30 AM – 12:15 PM Halls of Fame (Carroll Hall 128) Should the need arise to hold sessions remotely, we will use Zoom
Instructor	Dr. Maria Leonora (Nori) Comello (she/her) comello@email.unc.edu (Best way to reach me) (919) 928-2440 cell
Office hours & location	In office (Carroll 359) or on Zoom Tuesdays, 1-2pm, or by arrangement

Course description

This graduate-level seminar will examine social-scientific theories and concepts related to persuasion and social influence in a communication context. Topics include attitudes, beliefs, and other antecedents to behavior; reasoning and automatic processing; source, message, context, and receiver characteristics; interpersonal influences; and community-based/multi-component campaigns. Articles will be drawn from a range of persuasion and social-influence areas including health behavior change, social issue advocacy, environmental/science communication, and advertising/public relations. I expect everyone to come prepared for lively discussion! For the final deliverable, PhD students and MA students in the research track in the Hussman School of Journalism and Media will be expected to produce a study proposal that utilizes a persuasion theory applied to their area of interest. Hussman MA students in the professional track and students from other academic units may write a paper that applies some aspect of a persuasion theory to a professional/societal problem. Whatever you produce should be useful to your scholarly or professional goals; see me if you have questions.

Required readings and other content

- O'Keefe, D. J. Persuasion: Theory and research. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications. 3rd ed. (2015). Several chapters will be assigned over the semester. There will be a reserve copy at Park Library. Amazon and other online sources offer new and used copies, as well as rental options.
- Other required course readings will have full-text links on Canvas under Resources.

Honor code

I expect that all students will conduct themselves within the guidelines of the University honor system (https://studentconduct.unc.edu/about-us/forms-documents/instrument/). All academic work should be done with the high levels of honesty and integrity that this University demands. You are expected to produce your own work in this class. If you have any questions about your responsibility or your instructor's responsibility as a faculty member under the Honor Code, please see Dr. Heidi Hennink-Kaminski (Senior Associate Dean for Graduate Studies) or you may speak with a representative of the Student Attorney Office or the Office of the Dean of Students.

Accessibility resources and services

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill facilitates the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services, for students with disabilities, chronic medical conditions, a temporary disability or pregnancy complications resulting in barriers to fully accessing University courses, programs and activities. Accommodations are determined through the Office of Accessibility Resources and Service (ARS) for individuals with documented qualifying disabilities in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. See the ARS Website for contact information: https://ars.unc.edu or email ars@unc.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services

CAPS is strongly committed to addressing the mental health needs of a diverse student body through timely access to consultation and connection to clinically appropriate services, whether for short or long-term needs. At the Hussman School, we are fortunate to have Carolyn Ebeling as the CAPS embedded counselor in-house. Carolyn offers a warm and non-judgmental space for undergraduate and graduate students to explore their thoughts and feelings. Email them at cebeling@email.unc.edu to get connected. You may also explore resources at the CAPS website (https://caps.unc.edu/) or visit their facilities on the third floor of the Campus Health Services building for a walk-in evaluation to learn more. Also visit the Heels Care Network for additional mental-health and self-care resources: https://care.unc.edu/.

Title IX

Any student who is impacted by discrimination, harassment, interpersonal (relationship) violence, sexual violence, sexual exploitation, or stalking is encouraged to seek resources on campus or in the community. Reports can be made online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/. Please contact the University's Title IX Coordinator (titleixcoordinator@unc.edu), Report and Response Coordinators in the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (reportandresponse@unc.edu), Counseling and Psychological Services (confidential), or the Gender Violence Services Coordinators (gvsc@unc.edu; confidential) to discuss your specific needs. Additional resources are available at https://safe.unc.edu/ .

Non-discrimination

The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals' abilities and qualifications. Consistent with this principle and applicable laws, the University's Policy Statement on Non-Discrimination offers access to its educational programs and activities as well as employment terms and conditions without respect to race, color, gender, national origin, age, religion, creed, genetic information, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied. If you are experiencing harassment or discrimination, you can seek assistance and file a report through the Report and Response Coordinators (see contact info at safe.unc.edu) or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office, or online to the EOC at https://eoc.unc.edu/report-an-incident/ .

Diversity statement

I strive to make this classroom an inclusive space for all students. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to improve; I appreciate any suggestions. More broadly, our school has adopted diversity and inclusion mission and vision statements with accompanying goals. These complement the university non-discrimination policy described above, as well as broader university goals for diversity. In summary, UNC is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our community and does not discriminate in offering access to its educational programs and activities on the basis of age, gender, race, color, national origin, religion, creed, disability, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression. The Dean of Students (Suite 1106, Student Academic Services Building, CB# 5100, 450 Ridge Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27599-5100 or [919] 966-4042) has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies.

Absences

If you need to be absent, please let me know if advance if possible, and submit brief reflections on assigned readings for the day.

Course requirements (THIS IS A PREVIEW ONLY – FULL INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE POSTED ON CANVAS)

- Reflection and participation: Each week, there will be a prompt to encourage further analysis and application of our readings. The prompts may ask you to comment on something of value you took from the readings, a question or point of confusion about any of the readings, and/or how any of the readings relate to your life, your topic, current events, or past readings. Prompts might also ask you to react to media content in light of the week's topic. These reflections will usually take place in small-group discussion format at the start of class. We may also have a class activity that will encourage you to put principles from the week's readings into practice.

- Discussion leading: Each student will be expected to take a turn at leading discussion during one week in the semester. Please choose a topic that aligns with your research/professional goals; a sign-up sheet will be posted on Canvas. When you are discussion leader, it does NOT mean that you will be responsible for all class activities that week (I will continue to give an overview and context for assigned readings during our online sessions). However, you will be expected to contribute to our greater understanding by providing additional perspective and opportunity for discussion. On your assigned week:
  - Read assigned materials thoroughly.
  - Choose a scholarly article that aligns with the theme for the week. The article must be theory-based and must present a study (i.e., with data, using qualitative or quantitative methods). It should provide a valuable angle or counterpoint to the week's readings. I would love for you to be excited about the article!⊠
  - Write a brief written summary/critique of the article.
  - During class time, tell us about your article. Pose discussion questions (include these in your written summary).

  Detailed instructions for all of these components will be posted on Canvas under Assignments.

- <u>Study proposal or professional project</u>: You will be asked to develop a paper and present it to the class. More details will be provided on Canvas under Assignments, but please note the following.
  - *If you are a Hussman School PhD student or research-track MA student:* you should propose a study that investigates some area of persuasion or social influence research. It should include a theory-based overview of past research in the same or a similar area, a rationale for your study, the hypotheses or research questions you will investigate, and an outline of the methods you will use to collect data (study design; proposed participants; and operationalizations of dependent and independent variables*).* For this option, although the basic requirement is a proposal, students are encouraged to carry out as much of the study as possible during the semester. If you have an idea for some other kind of deliverable other than a study proposal (e.g., papers that would contribute to comps prep), please discuss with me.
  - *If you are a professional-track MA student at Hussman, or if you are a student from another academic unit:* you should write a paper that applies some aspect of a persuasion or social influence theory to a professional/societal problem. Examples of acceptable deliverables for professional projects include a campaign plan, a critical analysis of an organization's communication materials, or message design examples to meet a persuasive goal. A study proposal could also be useful for thesis prep. Whatever you choose, it should be a piece that will be useful as you pursue future studies or professional goals. Similar to a research proposal, it should include an overview of past research in the same or a similar area, a rationale for your project, and whatever deliverable you have chosen.

You will work on the paper by stages throughout the semester so that you can receive feedback from me about content and direction. The paper will be broken down into the following graded assignments:
  - Three ideas – Suggest three potential ideas for topics you want to study and why each is important to you and your field. The assignment instructions on Canvas will provide specific prompts you should address. I will provide guidance on selecting a topic as needed.
  - First draft – For the topic you choose, provide an intro and review of literature. If you are doing a study proposal, including RQs/hypotheses, and outline methods and other sections you plan to include. If you are doing a professional project or another type of paper, outline your next steps and what you will include in the final paper.
  - Presentation – Toward the end of the semester, each student will deliver a presentation to the class with slides/visuals. The purpose is to receive feedback prior to final paper turn-in at the end of the semester. Further, the presentation itself needs to employ some persuasion principles to facilitate attention and engagement. The time allotment and format will depend on the number of students.
  - Final paper – Address feedback from first draft/presentation and flesh out remaining sections.

Grading

Grades for overall course performance and most individual assignments will be based on the graduate scale (H, P, L, F). *As applied to final course grades*, interpretations are as follows:
- H = Your very best work. These students read and critically engage with all materials. They are able to apply concepts to practical and/or research-based contexts, suggest new directions, and significantly contribute to the body of scholarship in the area. Assignments are submitted on time and are well written and engaging. *Reserved for truly extraordinary work – I will actually say "wow!"*
- P = Your very best work. These students read and critically engage with all materials. They are able to apply concepts and suggest new directions in many instances. Assignments are submitted on time and are well written and engaging.
- L = Students read most of the material but do not often critically engage with it. They are able to apply concepts and suggest new directions in some instances.
- F = Students miss one or more classes without prior arrangement. They do not always read the material, and they fail to critically engage it.

Most individual assignments are also evaluated according to the H/P/L/F scale. *As applied to individual assignments,* a P signifies work that meets content and formatting requirements as explained in instructions, is well written, and is submitted on time. An H signifies work that meets the above and is also exceptional in terms of depth of analysis or significance of contribution – again a "wow!" assessment.

Although no formal points corresponding to the grades are issued, the WEIGHTS of each assignment in determining the final course grade are as follows:

Three ideas piece	5
First draft	15
Presentation	10
Final paper	40
Discussion leading (article critique and presentation)	20
Reflection and participation	10
TOTAL	100

For individual assignments, I will also provide written feedback, typically in the form of comments (sometimes extensive) added directly to your paper using the comment feature in Word.

Spring 2024 Course Outline – tentative schedule – subject to change

This schedule represents a good faith effort to outline our work over the course of the semester. However, because of unpredictable factors, the timeline and assignments are subject to change. I will alert you of any changes in readings, assignments, due dates, etc., over the course of the semester. Thank you for your flexibility!

	Topic
Week 1 Jan 10	Day one. Meet and greet, discuss course goals, go over syllabus, discuss research interests.
Week 2 Jan 17	**Overview and persuasion research methods** • O'Keefe, Chapters 1 & 9 • Dervin, B., & Foreman-Wernet, L. (2013). Sense-making methodology as an approach to understanding and designing for campaign audiences: a turn to communicating communicatively. In R. Rice, & C. Atkin *Public communication campaigns* (pp. 146-162). SAGE Publications, Inc.. FULL TEXT
Week 3 Jan 24	**Belief-based models of attitude change. "Three ideas" due** • O'Keefe, Chapter 4 • Gilbert, D. T. (1991). How mental systems believe. *American Psychologist*, *46*(2), 107-119. FULL TEXT • Reyna, V. F. (2021). A scientific theory of gist communication and misinformation resistance, with implications for health, education, and policy. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *118*(15), e1912441117. FULL TEXT
Week 4 Jan 31	**Cognitive dissonance and misinformation** • O'Keefe, Chapter 5 • Pearce, L., & Cooper, J. (2021). Fostering COVID-19 Safe Behaviors Using Cognitive Dissonance. *Basic & Applied Social Psychology*, *43*(5), 267–282. FULL TEXT • Lewandowsky, S. (2021). Climate change disinformation and how to combat it. *Annual Review of Public Health*, *42*, 1-21. FULL TEXT
Week 5 Feb 7	**Theories of behavioral intention; bridging the intention-behavior gap** • O'Keefe, Chapter 6 • Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A., & Whitwell, G. J. (2014). Lost in translation: Exploring the ethical consumer intention–behavior gap. *Journal of Business Research*, *67*(1), 2759-2767. FULL TEXT • Fogg, B. J., & Euchner, J. (2019). Designing for Behavior Change—New Models and Moral Issues: An Interview with BJ Fogg. *Research-Technology Management*, *62*(5), 14-19. FULL TEXT

Week 6 Feb 14	**INDIVIDUAL CHECK-INS – SIGN UP FOR A SLOT**
Week 7 Feb 21	**Elaboration Likelihood Model / information processing, bias, and reflection** • O'Keefe, Chapter 8 • Cox, W. T., & Devine, P. G. (2019). The prejudice habit-breaking intervention: An empowerment-based confrontation approach. In *Confronting prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 249-274). Academic Press. FULL TEXT • Resnicow, K., & McMaster, F. (2012). Motivational Interviewing: moving from why to how with autonomy support. *International Journal of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity*, *9*(19), 1-9. FULL TEXT
Week 8 Feb 28	**Message factors, emotions, and narratives** • O'Keefe, Chapter 11 • Myrick, J. G., & Oliver, M. B. (2014). Laughing and Crying: Mixed Emotions, Compassion, and the Effectiveness of a YouTube PSA About Skin Cancer. *Health Communication*. FULL TEXT • Canella, G. (2017). Social movement documentary practices: Digital storytelling, social media and organizing. *Digital Creativity*, *28*(1), 24-37. FULL TEXT **I will send out a mid-semester evaluation to get your feedback on the course thus far.**
Week 9 Mar 6	**Communicator & receiver factors** • O'Keefe, Chapter 10 & 12 • In-class feedback on projects/first drafts **BY END OF WEEK: FIRST DRAFT DUE**
Week 10 Mar 13	**SPRING BREAK!**
Week 11 Mar 20	**Positive & negative reinforcement / Gamification** • Hanus, M. D., & Fox, J. (2015). Assessing the effects of gamification in the classroom: A longitudinal study on intrinsic motivation, social comparison, satisfaction, effort, and academic performance. *Computers & Education*, *80*, 152-161. FULL TEXT • Komaki, J. L., & Minnich, M. L. (2016). A behavioral approach to organizational change: Reinforcing those responsible for facilitating the climate and hence promoting diversity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*, *36*(2-3), 154-184.

Week 12 Mar 27	**Identity & representation** • Scharrer, E., Ramasubramanian, S., & Banjo, O. (2022). Media, Diversity, and Representation in the U.S.: A Review of the Quantitative Research Literature on Media Content and Effects. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, *66*(4), 723–749. FULL TEXT • Comello, M. L. G., & Farman, L. (2016). Identity as a Moderator and Mediator of Communication Effects: Evidence and Implications for Message Design. *The Journal of Psychology*, *150*(7), 822-836. FULL TEXT • Sereno, K., Walter, N., & Brooks, J. J. (2020). Rethinking student participation in the college classroom: Can commitment and self-affirmation enhance oral participation?. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *50*(6), 351-362. FULL TEXT
Week 13 Apr 3	**Interpersonal, cultural, and community influences** • Francis, D. B., & Finn, L. (2022). A theoretically based analysis of twitter conversations about trauma and mental health: examining responses to storylines on the television show queen sugar. *Health Communication*, *37*(9), 1104-1112. FULL TEXT • Dutta, M. J. (2015). Decolonizing communication for social change: A Culture-Centered approach. *Communication Theory*, *25*(2), 123-143. FULL TEXT • Schau, H. J., Muñiz Jr, A. M., & Arnould, E. J. (2009). How brand community practices create value. *Journal of Marketing*, *73*(5), 30-51. FULL TEXT
Week 14 Apr 10	**Students' choice**
Week 15 Apr 17	**INDIVIDUAL CHECK-INS**
Week 16 Apr 24	**Presentations of projects**
	FINAL PAPERS DUE MAY 3 BY MIDNIGHT

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!