COMG364: Persuasion and Social Influence
Section 001 Fall 2013
MWF 9:30-10:20 a.m.
Crawford 115

Instructor
Jinguang (Andrew) Zhang
George Hall 320
E-mail: jzhang6@hawaii.edu
Phone: (808)956-8409
Fax: (808)956-3947
Office Hours: MW 10:30-11:30 or by appointment

Course Description
This course introduces you to the science of persuasion and social influence. Because this is first of all a science class, we will discuss a diverse array of theories on how people influence each other's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Meanwhile, we will talk about many very cool experiments that either supported or challenged those theories. The goal of introducing all those theories and research finding is to familiarize you with the basic concepts and scientific principles of persuasion and social influence. These concepts and principles will enable you to start thinking and talking about attempts of persuasion and social influence, which are pervasive in daily life, intellectually. Equally important, you will be able to apply those ideas to real life and foster positive changes to the community and larger society.

Student Learning Outcome
After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. explain the criteria for determining whether a communication event counts as persuasion;
2. describe different ways we cognitively process persuasive messages;
3. explain and critique the relationship between attitudes and behaviors;
4. describe the basic theoretical propositions of accepted persuasion theories;
5. identify principles of persuasion that regularly occur in your everyday life;
6. develop a persuasive campaign using theory to guide its construction.

Course Text


You can buy earlier versions of the books, but you will be responsible for any discrepancies between the current version and the version you buy.

Course Website
You are expected to be familiar with Laulima (http://laulima.hawaii.edu/) for access to the course website. The website will provide you with the latest announcements, readings, and lecture slides. You are expected to regularly check the Laulima website. You must log in using your University of Hawai‘i username and password.

Course Policies
Attendance. I will not take attendance, and there will be no attendance points. You are strongly encouraged to attend classes, but in the end it is really your choice. If you miss a class, you are responsible for the missed materials, assignments, or announcements. You are welcome to come and ask questions during my office hours, but I will not repeat a class during office hour meetings, because
those meetings are not for that purpose. Going over class materials during office hour meetings will also take up other students’ time and deprive of their chance of asking questions.

**Late work policy.** Absolutely NO late work or make-up exams will be allowed/accepted unless some extraordinary, documented circumstance arose, which precluded you from submitting the work. Excused absences must be documented (e.g., doctor’s notes) and submitted as early as possible. The instructor of the course should be notified immediately when such circumstances occur and either an alternative assignment or extension will be provided. If you are participating in a university-affiliated activity, you must make arrangements with the instructor prior to the absence.

**Academic integrity.** Any student caught plagiarizing an assignment, cheating on an exam, or in possession of an unauthorized copy of an exam will be immediately reported to the Head of the Communicology Department and receive a failing grade on the assignment or exam. Plagiarism includes the lack of acknowledgement for another person’s original thoughts or writings, copying of another’s work verbatim without the use of quotation marks and citation of the source, the use of a person or agency in the business of selling term papers, and the submission of a paper written for another class without the permission of both instructors.

University of Hawai’i’s Student Conduct Code covers these and other infractions in greater depth. You are expected to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code, which can be found at [http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/](http://studentaffairs.manoa.hawaii.edu/policies/conduct_code/).

**E-mail use.** You are responsible for checking your e-mail account frequently and consistently to remain current with University communications. You are expected to monitor and manage your e-mail storage quota to ensure that their mailboxes are not saturated, and you are able to receive new messages. Please check your e-mail every day to keep up to date on important correspondence related to this course.

You are welcome to send me emails and ask questions. I will do my best to reply in a timely manner, but please allow a 24-hour response time. If you still do not see my reply by then, do not hesitate to send me an email again.

**Grade Appeals Policy.** Any grade in the class is able to be appealed if you believe there is a compelling reason for why you should have received a higher grade. You are responsible for preparing a type-written argument, which may be e-mailed, detailing why they feel a higher grade is deserved. To appeal a grade received on an assignment or exam, you are asked to provide all of the necessary documentation with the written argument (e.g., paper with instructor’s comments, exam question number, etc.). All appeals must be submitted within one week of receiving the grade.

The instructor will review grade appeals and determine whether any points should be granted. If no amicable solution can be met after the first grade appeal, then you may file a secondary grade appeal. For such appeals, an independent instructor will re-grade the assignment and issue a grade. The second grade (whether it is higher or lower than the original) will be recorded and is not able to be appealed.

**Course Assessments**

**Papers:** You are expected to write two papers for this course. These papers themselves do not build on each other, but they are structurally similar and require similarly kinds of writing skills. Specifically, in each paper you are expected to (1) identify and describe a phenomenon (e.g., your own experience, a campaign, a community issue, etc.), (2) summarize relevant theories and research findings, and (3) analyze the chosen phenomenon with the theories and research findings. These tasks may appear rather academic—“who’s gonna talk about theory and research outside of school?” This could very well be true, but chances are that you are going to do the following for your boss when you go to work: in a report (1) identify and describe the problems that you think need to be addressed in your field of business, (2) summarize what other companies have been trying to do to tackle those problems, and (3) critically analyze those current solutions and propose your own.
Notice the similarities between the assignments and what you might end up doing in the “real” world? Clear writing and the ability to summarize and critically analyze a problem—including other people’s thoughts—go a long way in helping you succeed in your career. That is why the assignments have those components and why you should learn the associated writing skills.

**Paper 1.** This paper is a reflection paper on your personal experience of a persuasive/social influence attempt with another person (e.g., your friend, you boss, you parent, etc) or a group of people (e.g., your peers). You will describe this persuasion/social influence attempt and identify its type. Is it a persuasion attempt as defined in class, compliance, conformity, minority influence, polarization, or a combination of them? Secondly, you will analyze the content of this persuasion/social influence attempt—what attitude of yours is being changed or reinforced? What is the nature of this attitude, where did it come from, how did it influence your behavior and your interpersonal relationship with others? The paper should be approximately 4 pages in length and may be the first time you will link scientific principles to real life scenarios. Further instructions about the paper will be available through Laulima.

**Paper 2.** The second paper involves identifying a persuasion campaign in the real world and evaluating it based on a) the goals of the campaign (i.e., are the goals to establish a new attitude, change an existing attitude, or reinforce an existing attitude/behavior), b) the appropriateness of the campaign with respect to the target group for whom the campaign is intended, c) the persuasive strategies used in the campaign, and d) the prospective efficacy of the campaign. At the end of the paper, you are asked to describe how you would improve the quality of the campaign. It is important that you draw on relevant theories, concepts, and research in this paper when appropriate. The paper should be approximately 5 pages in length. Further instructions about the paper will be available through Laulima.

**Presentations:** Oral presentations and writing complement each other. Sometimes you do not fully grasp an idea until you can verbally explain it. Other times, you think you have understood an idea but you find it very difficult to put the idea into words. Doing well in one task will help you succeed in the other, and that is why in academia and most other professions written reports and oral presentations go hand in hand. In this class you will do two presentations, and in both cases, the presentation will precede the due date of the written assignment. This is to give you a chance to work out the outline of your paper assignments and seek feedback from your classmates and me. *Presentation 1* is done individually and connected to your second paper assignment, and *Presentation 2* will be done on group bases and is part of a group project (i.e., campaign development). More instructions will be posted online.

**Exams:** There will be two exams for this course, a mid-term and a final. They consist of only multiple choice questions and are not accumulative. You will be allowed the entire class period for the mid-term and the full three hours for the final. Both exams are closed-book.

**Research Participation:** An important way—perhaps the only way—to advance knowledge is through conducting scientific research (e.g., surveys, experiments, etc.). You can contribute to this process by participating in studies that are conducted in our department. For this class, you are required to participate in a total of 2 hours of research. It can be one single study that takes two hours, two studies that take one hour each, or four half-hour ones.

To look for research opportunity, go to the department SONA website:


If you have already had an account (created in the last two semesters), you can just use that account. Otherwise, you will need to create one—click on the link above and follow instructions. Let me know, though, if you have any questions.
If you are not 18 or older, or you do not wish to participate in research, you can opt to complete a “non-research alternative” assignment. You will need to talk to me and I will decide what kind of assignment for you to complete. This assignment will not be more difficult than participating in research studies, and could take up to two hours. The amount of hours you spend on this assignment will correspond to the points you get for the class. If you choose to complete only a half-hour assignment, then you will get 0.5 points. If you choose a two-hour one, then you get the full points for research participation.

**Grades**

**Paper Assignments**
- Paper 1 (100): 10%
- Paper 2 (100): 10%

**Presentations**
- Presentation 1 (100): 10% of course total
- Presentation 2 (100): 20%

**Examinations**
- Exam 1 (100): 20% of course total
- Exam 2 (100): 30%

**Research participation 2 points**

So what do all those numbers mean? The 100’s in parentheses mean that, each time I grade your assessment items (e.g., papers, presentation, and exams), the full grade is 100. But not all items are created equal; some are more important than others. For example, Presentation 2, which worth 20% of the total grade, is more important than Presentation 1, which worth 10%. Therefore, when I calculate your course total, I will multiply the raw scores of each of your assessment items with the weighting associated with the item, and then add up the weighted scores together to be your course total.

For example, you got 80 for Paper 1, 75 for Paper 2, 88 for Presentation 1, 90 for Presentation 2, 65 for Exam 1, and 100 for Exam 2. You also complete the two-hour research requirement. Your course total will then be: $80 \times 0.10 + 75 \times 0.10 + 88 \times 0.10 + 90 \times 0.20 + 65 \times 0.20 + 100 \times 0.30 + 2 = 87.3$. Then I will assign you the letter grade according to the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRADE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>97.0% – 100%</td>
<td>485 – 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93.0% – 96.9%</td>
<td>465 – 484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90.0% – 92.9%</td>
<td>450 – 464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87.0% – 89.9%</td>
<td>435 – 449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83.0% – 86.9%</td>
<td>415 – 434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80.0% – 82.9%</td>
<td>400 – 414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77.0% – 79.9%</td>
<td>385 – 399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>70.0% – 76.9%</td>
<td>360 – 384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67.0% – 69.9%</td>
<td>335 – 349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63.0% – 66.9%</td>
<td>315 – 334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60.0% – 62.9%</td>
<td>300 – 314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0% – 59.9%</td>
<td>Below 299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A course total of 87.3 will earn you a “B+” for the class. Here below is what each letter grade means:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Exceptional work; Far exceeds minimum requirements for the assignment; Demonstrated mastery over subject area; Very few technical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Above average work; Exceeds minimum requirements; Demonstrated competency in subject area; Some technical problems but not distracting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Average work; Meets the minimum requirements for the assignment; Demonstrated superficial knowledge in subject area; Technical issues apparent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Below average work; Does not meet minimum requirements; Does not appear to understand assignment; Did not seek help when necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Poor quality work; Appeared to submit work haphazardly; Did not put in appropriate effort; No support in assignment; Many technical issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How I grade.** When I grade your papers and presentations, I use a combination of grid and comparative grading. A grid determines the requirements (e.g., structure, clarity, argument strength, etc.) that you will have to meet, and is the objective side of grading. However, unlike math where there are absolutely objective criteria to evaluate an answer (e.g., 4 plus 4 must equal to 8 in the current algebraic system), not such criteria exist to evaluate writing and presentations. How good a piece of writing and a presentation are is inherently comparative—your grades for paper assignment and presentation also depend on your classmates’ performance. Class performance determines the frame of reference in which I evaluate individual assignments. For example, if all of you suck, then my expectation will be low and a crappy piece of assignment by, for example, my standard, will receive an A if it is better than most others in the class. Conversely, if all of you excel, then I will be harsher in grading to make distinctions among you guys. Therefore, every time I start to grade, I will read through all papers for a first time to get a sense of the overall quality and determine what an average paper will look like. I then start from there to decide whether a paper is a mediocre one, a good one, or a bad one based on the grid. The same method applies to grading presentations. I will make detail notes when I listen and then decide what is a good and a bad presentation following the grids and based on the comparison among you.

**Course Schedule* and Due Date of Paper Assignments**

**Week 1 Aloha!**

Aug 26 Class introduction

Aug 28 Type of social influence (G&S, p. 23-35 till “dual processes of persuasion”)

Aug 30 Type of social influence continued

**Week 2 Attitude**

Sep 2 Attitude formation (Mackie & Smith chapter 7)

Sep 4 Attitude formation continued

Sep 6 Function of attitude

**Week 3 Attitude and Behavior**

Sep 9 Cognitive dissonance theory (G&S, p. 57 “psychological consistency” till the end of the
chapter)

Sep 11 Self-perception theory (Bem, 1972: first 8 pages till "experimental evidence")

Sep 13 Theories of reasoned action and planned behavior (G&S, p. 50-53 till “the persistence of attitudes”)

Week 4 Communicator Characteristics

Sep 16 Compliance and coercion (C Chapter 6); Paper 1 due

Sep 18 Credibility (G&S, p. 74-83, till “the factor analytic approach”)

Sep 20 Physical attractiveness (C p. 141-159)

Week 5 Message Characteristics I: Mental Short-Cuts

Sep 23 Framing effect (G&S, p. 195-197, the section on gain- and loss-framed messages)

Sep 25 Primacy/recency effects (G&S, p. 201-203, the section on the primacy/recency effects)

Sep 27 Vividness effects (G&S, p. 160-161, till “language intensity”)

Week 6 Message Characteristics II: Emotional Appeals

Sep 30 Fear appeal (G&S, p. 287-292, till “humorous appeal”)

Oct 02 Fear appeal continued

Oct 04 Guilt appeal (O’Keefe, 2002, “Guilt as a persuasive mechanism”)

Week 7 Presentation Week

Week 8 Mid-term and Writing Workshop

Oct 14 Catch-up day

Oct 16 Writing workshop; group formation

Oct 18 Mid-term

Week 9 Attitude Resistance

Oct 21 Psychological reactance (G&S, p. 64-65 till “counterattitudinal advocacy”)

Oct 23 Message sidedness and inoculation (G&S, p. 203 to the end of the chapter)

Oct 25 Inoculation continued

Week 10 Receiver psychology


Oct 30 Elaboration likelihood model (G&S, p. 36-38, till “the heuristic systematic model;” O’Keefe 1990)
Nov 01 Video day—Genocide; **Paper 2 Due**

**Week 11 Social identity and self-categorization theories**

Nov 4 Social identity theory (Giles et al., 2009; Hogg & Reid, 2006)

Nov 6 Self-categorization theory; **Talk-to-me due**

Nov 8 Self-categorization theory continued

**Week 12 Conforming and Polarization**

Nov 11 Veteran’s Day, no class

Nov 13 Conformity (G&S, Chapter 6)

Nov 15 Attitude and group polarization

**Week 13 Language and Group Norm Perceptions**

Nov 18 Gender and language use (G&S Chapter 7)

Nov 20 Gender and language use continued

Nov 22 Third-person perceptions (Davidson, 1983)

**Week 14 New frontier of persuasion/social influence research**

Nov 25 Natural and sexual selection theories (Gaulin, Chapter 1 & 7)

Nov 27 Fundamental motives and social influence (C Chapter 7)

Nov 29 Happy Thanksgiving; no class!

**Week 15 New frontier continued**

Dec 2 Red queen, parasite, and conformity (Murray et al. 2011, Introduction only)

Dec 4 Red queen, parasite, and conformity continued

Dec 6 Catch-up day

**Week 15 Final Project Presentation**

Dec 9 Final project presentation

Dec 11 Final project presentation & wrapping up

*Course schedule may be subject to change.*