COMG 664 – PERSUASION AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE
Fall 2012 (TH 3:00-5:30 p.m., George 335)

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Office Hours: Friday 1:00 – 2:00 pm and by appointment

Course Description

The study of persuasion is one of the oldest subdisciplines within both social scientific and humanistic approaches to speech communication. It has also been of central interest in the fields of advertising and marketing (product promotion, public service campaigns), sociology, political science (voting studies, political campaigns), interpersonal influences, and other fields.

This course is designed to introduce students to theories, concepts, strategies and processes of persuasion and social influence. COMG 664 will explore the dynamic and exciting field of persuasive communication in various applied settings. This course should be an eye opener for students who wish to develop expert views of classical and contemporary approaches to social influence.

We will begin by discussing some of the fundamental features of persuasion. Subsequently, we will focus on "theories" of persuasion, or different explanations for how and why people process, evaluate, and resist or yield to persuasive appeals, in the context of interpersonal, intercultural, organizational, mass communication, and virtual settings. Special attention will be given to the cultural influences on social influence, since the types of social influence situations that occur frequently in our day-to-day life are becoming increasingly intercultural.

Through participation in this course, student should (1) understand a range of theoretical and empirical issues in the study and practice of persuasion and (2) be able to critically evaluate persuasion and social influence scholarship in the discipline. This course will also help students develop critical outlook toward influence attempts (both implicit and explicit) prevalent in contemporary society.

Textbook


In addition, electronic readings will be available at the Laulima site.

Tentative Course Outline

(1) 8/23 -- Introduction and outline of class
    Generation of Knowledge as a Form of Social Influence

(2) 8/30 – Overview of Persuasion
    Science of Persuasion and Ethical Persuasion

(3) 9/6 – Cultural Influence (“The Culture Code”: Ch. 1-12)
(4) 9/13: Culture Code (Continued)
    Source Effect

(5) 9/20: Source Effect (Continued)
    Receiver Effect/Biculturalism and Locus of Control

(6) 9/27: Linguistic Persuasion

(7) 10/4: Cultivation vs. Effect: Shaping of culture

(8) 10/11: Attitude-Behavior Relations
    Exam Review

(9) 10/18 -- Midterm exam

(10) 10/25: Cognitive Consistency Theory

(11) 11/8: Fear Appeal

(12) 11/15: No class (NCA Conference)

(13) 11/22: No class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

(14) 11/29: Persuasion in Applied Settings
    Medical Decision Making & Bioethics

(15) 12/6: Presentations/Exam Review

(16) 12/13: Final Exam (3:00 – 5:30pm)

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Course requirements and evaluation

Midterm exam       25% (50 points)
Final exam         25% (50 points)
Class Discussion/Leader     10% (20 points)
Paper               40% (80 points)

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Total Points 100% (200 points)

Exams: There will be a midterm and a final exam. Exam will consist of short answer questions and will cover points covered in class discussions based on the readings.

Individual Literature Review Paper: The purpose of this project is to complete a conference-quality review paper focusing on an aspect of social influence. Each student will select a theory/theoretical area and develop a paper which discusses the current state of the theory. The student is
expected to review all relevant literature on the theory. The paper will contain (a) a review of the theoretical terms, assumptions, and propositions, (b) the historical background of the theory, (c) a discussion of the validity of the theory based on empirical evidence, and (d) identification of areas needing future research. This paper is due December 4 and constitutes 40% of your grade. To prevent last minute scrambling at the end of the semester and to allow students to get instructor feedback prior to turning in the graded paper, students will be asked to submit this project in a number of phases. Only the final phase of the project (i.e. the paper) will be given a course grade. Thus, students are not required to submit any phase listed below except the final paper. Instructor feedback on each of the phases will only be provided if a student completes the phase on or prior to the date assigned. The phases are described below.

a. Reference paper: The paper will provide a list of relevant articles (a minimum of 10) with a one to three sentence summary following each citations. Due: September 20 (due at noon)

b. First Outline: Students will provide a detailed outline of the first part of their paper (review of the theoretical terms, assumptions, and propositions, and the historical background of the theory). The outline must contain complete sentences and have citations where appropriate. The historical background of the theory may be a separate section or discussed when laying out the theory. The outline will be graded based on the criteria of conciseness and clarity. Due: October 18 (due at noon)

c. Second Outline: The second outline will include appropriate revisions made to outline 1 and will detail the last half of the paper. Due: November 15 (due at noon)

d. Final paper: The final paper should demonstrate expertise in your theoretical area and should be free of typographical and grammatical errors. Paper is due on December 4 (Tuesday), and should be a minimum of 25 pages. The paper should have suitable subheadings and obvious structure and organization -- in other words, it should not be one long, continuous paragraph. Use APA format throughout the paper. Finally, each student will present the summary of the paper in class (about 15 minutes). Each presentation will be followed by question and answer session. This paper should be submitted via email to kmin@hawaii.edu by the noon on the day it is due.

Discussion Leaders: In addition, each student will be “a discussion leader” for presenting selected readings assigned each week. (One presentation should be before the midterm, the other after the midterm). Each student will present written and oral summaries of these abstracts to the class. Your abstracts should summarize the rationale, research questions, methods, and results of each study, and should note convergent or divergent research findings across studies as well as implications of the studies for the theoretical approach discussed that day. Conceptual/methodological limitations of the research also should be discussed.

Participation: It is expected that each student will have read the chapters and papers assigned by the day they are listed on the schedule. On that day, you are presumed to be an expert on these readings. You will be called on to explain various concepts and theories and to provide examples for them.
The following scale will serve as the basis for assigning grades.

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<tr>
<th>%</th>
<th>Grade*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90 - 100</td>
<td>A-, A, A+</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 - 89</td>
<td>B-, B, B+</td>
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<tr>
<td>70 - 79</td>
<td>C-, C, C+</td>
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<tr>
<td>60 - 69</td>
<td>D-, D, D+</td>
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<td>Below 59</td>
<td>F</td>
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* The instructor reserves the right to adjust this scale depending on the distribution of scores.

Course Policies

Assignments: Assignments are due on or before the regularly scheduled class time on the date due. All assignments should be typed and double spaced. **ABSOLUTELY NO late assignments will be accepted.** In principle, no make-up or early examinations will be allowed. In case of an extraordinary and urgent conflict that is verifiable, instructor may allow a make-up or early exam. However, arrangements have to be made prior to the exam date with the instructor.

Academic honesty: It is students’ responsibility to complete their own work as best as they can in the time provided. Cheating, plagiarism and falsification of data are serious offenses. Anyone found guilty of academic misconduct should expect to fail the entire course and have a record of the matter forwarded to the Dean of Students.

Attendance: You are allowed two absences, excused or not, no matter the reason. After two absences, your grade goes down a notch (e.g., B+ to a B) **(no exceptions).** Use these days wisely. You never know what may come up. These days include, sickness, hospitalization, death in the family, laziness, oversleeping, job, etc. You need not provide excuses to the professor. Those students with perfect attendance or only one absence will be given some extra credit points at the end of the semester.