

# CO 4253/6253—ELEMENTS OF PERSUASION

## COURSE SYLLABUS

SPRING 2013

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Required Texts: (1) Larson, Charles U. (2013). *Persuasion Reception and Responsibility*, 13<sup>th</sup> Edition.

(2) For written assignments, you'll need to have a copy of the APA (American Psychological Association) or MLA (Modern Language Association) style manual handy (APA and MLA guidelines should be available online as well).

(3) A copy of the film, *Thank You For Smoking*, must be rented or purchased for the last writing assignment.

(4) For graduate students, I'll post additional course readings (several pieces of academic scholarship) throughout the semester, and they will be available on the CO 4253/6253 MyCourses webpage (see "CO 6253 course readings"). I'll keep you posted on when these readings should be downloaded, and for what purpose each will serve. On occasion, I may assign an additional reading (or two) to undergraduate students as well.

Course Goals: Influencing others is something we do and have done to us daily. Persuasion is the study of how people influence others. We will look at persuasion and consider how the ancient scholars viewed persuasion, and how modern technologies reshape this ancient human art. **People attempt to guide other people's thoughts and actions.** This is the central premise / belief around which this course is constructed. People persuade people to influence a given outcome.

Our task this semester is to examine persuasion in light of other classes across the discipline, classical and contemporary theory, and in practice. We will explore persuasion in the media and in our relationships with one another. We will explore persuasive efforts that seek identification with other people, organizations, and even ideas and ideologies. We want to identify and to learn from those who are effective in persuasion and those who do it poorly. In the process, we want to better understand how others are trying to influence us, and how we can influence them.

We will discuss theory, practice, ethics, and outcomes. As we focus on theory, we will always do so with an eye towards application. We should always ask, "How does this

theory operate in my life, and in my interaction with others?” In other words, we will answer the “so what?” question. Because your experience is uniquely your own, it is important for you to engage the material from the textbook and relate it to your life. In many ways, how you engage the material will determine how much value you get out of the course.

Course Difficulty and Completion: Taking an online course and succeeding in the online classroom environment requires diligence, integrity, and discipline. Accordingly, each online student must take responsibility for his or her own actions (meeting deadlines, etc.), and keeping up with the course material and expectations. You will get to work at your own pace, of course, but everyone should come into the course with an understanding that I have similar expectations of my online and face-to-face students.

In other words, personal involvement is the “heart and soul” of this course!

Computer/Technology Issues: When you sign up for an online class, you are assuming the responsibility for having the computer skills, equipment, and knowledge to work in this context. Your computer problems are not a justification for failing to access MyCourses, taking quizzes, meeting deadlines, and submitting written assignments and exams.

On that note, please check for weekly class announcements/reminders on MyCourses (see the “Announcements” link under “Course Tools”). Also, check your MSU e-mail account on a regular basis for any additional course information, for it will be the primary e-mail account I use to communicate with you.

It is also your responsibility to make sure that the proctor you choose is reliable and aware of the importance of deadlines. More information on this matter is contained in this syllabus, and will be discussed in future MyCourses announcements and/or e-mails and other communication from me.

Course Organization and Assignments: The class notes (via PowerPoint) are a summary of each chapter. They will be posted on MyCourses to help you organize your own notes and thoughts as you prepare for quizzes, exams, class discussions, and written assignments.

I'll also post weekly podcasts (think of these as audio lectures) to reflect and elaborate on that week's chapter(s) and class notes, offer some of my own observations and experiences, and give you a few questions and ideas to think about. Be sure to watch these—they will help supplement the class notes, and will be mined for test material.

The textbook, class notes, podcasts and the additional reading assignments have been carefully ordered to build on and reinforce each other. As the semester progresses, you should be picking up ideas and skills that will equip you to interpret and produce persuasive messages more effectively.

The assignments for **undergraduate students** for this class are:

- (1) Two exams @ **100 points** each
- (2) Five online quizzes (can be taken via MyCourses) @ **20 points** each for a total of **100 points**
- (3) MyCourses discussion board postings = **50 points**
- (4) Theory application piece = **75 points**
- (5) *Thank You For Smoking* analysis = **125 points**

Undergraduate Student Grading Scale:

**A** = 492-550 pts. (90-100%)  
**B** = 437-491 pts. (80-89%)  
**C** = 382-436 pts. (70-79%)  
**D** = 327-381 pts. (60-69%)

**F** = below 327 pts. (below 60%)

The assignments for **graduate students** are as follows:

- (1) Two exams @ **125 points** each
- (2) Five online quizzes (can be taken via MyCourses) @ **20 points** each for a total of **100 points**
- (3) MyCourses discussion board postings = **50 points**
- (4) Ad analysis = **75 points**
- (5) Book Review = **100 points**
- (6) *Thank You for Smoking* = **125 points**

Graduate Student Grading Scale:

**A** = 627-700 pts. (90-100%)  
**B** = 557-626 pts. (80-89%)  
**C** = 487-556 pts. (70-79%)  
**D** = 417-486 pts. (60-69%)

**F** = below 417 pts. (below 60%)

**NOTE:** I do not “bump up” student grades if you are one or two points shy of the next letter grade. For example, if you have 436 points at the end of the semester (or 556 if you’re a graduate student), you will receive a “C” in the class—not a “B.” Remember: your grade is your responsibility. However, if you have a question about your grade, or feel that I’ve made a mistake, please do not hesitate to ask.

Grades for individual assignments will be posted on MyCourses. Individual grades can be viewed by clicking the “My Grades” tab on MyCourses. No one else will be able to see your grades for the class.

**Exams:** There will be two exams during the semester (see the class schedule that’s been posted on MyCourses for exact dates). Each exam will cover several chapters. Each exam will be a combination of true/false, multiple choice, short answer and essay questions. If you have access or are close to the main campus, you can take your exam at the MSU Center for Distance Education (located in Memorial Hall). If you decide to take your exam on campus, please contact the CDE office @ 662-325-8382 to schedule an appointment in advance. The sooner you do this the better, for there are limited seats, times, and computers available. Otherwise, you must find a proctor from one of the following positions:

1. Public or private community college or university faculty or staff within an academic department, distance learning or independent study office, counseling or advising center, dean, registrar, official testing center, library, HRM office
2. Public or private K-12 faculty, principal or headmaster, vice-principal, guidance counselor, library, or school superintendent
3. Certified city or county librarian
4. United State Armed Forces Education Officer
5. Interactive Video Site Facilitator
6. Organizational supervisor or HRM officer

Choose someone responsible. Having an irresponsible proctor does not relieve you of your academic responsibilities.

The CDE Proctor Request form must be filled out and turned back in to the CDE (fax # 662-325-2657) by **Friday, January 25 @ 5:00**. It is your responsibility to fill out the form and make sure that it reaches the CDE office by the deadline. A link to the form can be found on the CO 4253/6253 MyCourses home page.

Exams will be uploaded to MyCourses, and will be password protected (The password and instructions will be e-mailed to the proctor you choose, and he/she will use the password to allow access the exam). Exams **cannot** be taken in your home, in the home of your proctor, or in any private residence or location. Exams can be taken at your place

of employment, your proctor's place of employment, or any similar public venue (library, school, etc.). **Please complete this Proctor Request Form and fax it to 662-325-2657.** Failure to fax this completed form will result in an exam not being sent to the proctor.

**NOTE:** The proctor request form asks for your proctor's e-mail address. This address must be work-related or of a professional nature. The CDE office will not accept e-mail addresses from yahoo, hotmail, or other personal e-mail services. It is your responsibility to make sure that your proctor has received the password for each exam. The password is typically delivered via e-mail a few days before each exam. It is a good idea to contact your proctor a couple of days before you take the exam to make sure the password for that exam has been received. If the password has not been sent to your proctor, or you believe an error has been made, contact the CDE office, specifically Jane Maddox @ [jmaddox@distance.msstate.edu](mailto:jmaddox@distance.msstate.edu) or 662-325-7330 and report the problem.

**I am not directly involved in the approval (or disapproval) of proctor forms. Any questions regarding this process (including whether or not your proctor form has been received) should be directed to Ms. Maddox.** However, if you are having trouble finding a proctor or if you are having problems having the exam passwords sent to your proctor, I should know about it—this won't excuse your responsibility in finding someone or solving the problem, but I should be kept "in the loop," so to speak, of any difficulties you are having. If you do this in a timely manner, I will do my best to help you solve the problems you're having so you can complete each exam within the given time frame.

That said, do not wait until the last minute to take your exam, for I may still hold you responsible for any last-minute technology or proctor problems that prevent you from taking the exam. I've given you plenty of time to find a proctor, and I've allowed for several days to take each exam. It may be necessary to set up an alternate testing time with the proctor in case of emergency, illness of either party, or to have time to solve any technology or password issues that you may be having. If you wait until the last day of the deadline to take an exam and for some reason your proctor does not show or gets ill, or you haven't checked with the proctor before hand to see if he/she has received the password, I may not extend the deadline. By setting up an alternate time, taking the exams as early as possible, and/or keeping in contact with your proctor to make sure the password for each exam will be received, you will ensure that you meet your responsibilities and not get a failing grade for the exam(s) in question.

**NOTE:** You will not be able take any exams until you have a proctor. Furthermore, you cannot re-take an exam that you missed because you do not have a proctor, and you will receive a **ZERO** for the exam(s) in question.

You will only need to fill out one Proctor Request Form for all exams. However, if you change proctors, you will need to fill out another form and send it to the CDE.

You do not need a proctor to administer your quizzes—they are considered "open book."

**NOTE:** Keep the process of finding a proctor as simple as possible: (1) if you live near the MSU campus, you can have your exams proctored on campus (just be sure to contact the CDE office as soon as possible). (2) If you live out-of-town (or out-of-state), find someone as soon as possible to proctor the exam, fill out the Proctor Request Form (one form for the entire semester, except if you change proctors). The key is to not wait until the last minute to take care of this very important detail.

**Quizzes:** The quizzes, taken through MyCourses, are designed to prepare you for your exams. See the course schedule for exact quiz dates. The format of each quiz will be short answer or essay.

For each quiz you may use your text, class notes, or notes from the podcasts. You will have **one (1) week** to complete each quiz once it is opened, and up to **one hour** to complete each quiz once it is opened (I usually open up the window at 12:01 a.m. on the first day, and close it at 11:59 p.m. on the last day of the quiz). Once you open the quiz, you must complete it. Quizzes will only be available to you one time so make sure when you open it that you are prepared to complete it in one sitting.

In addition, each question will be presented to you one at a time, and you can go back to a previous question if you'd like. Again, please see the course schedule for specific due dates.

On the MyCourses page, click "Assessments," and then click on the appropriate quiz (which will be labeled) to begin. If you have any questions, please, for your benefit, ask me before you begin the quiz (because once a quiz is opened it must be completed within one hour).

**NOTE:** If you miss a quiz, you cannot make it up under any circumstances.

**Class "Discussions":** Healthy communication is a two-way, active process. It is my belief that students, even those in an online environment, can and must contribute to the health and well being of the classroom culture. MyCourses has a discussion board function that will be utilized to keep us "in sync" as a class, allow you to demonstrate the knowledge and skills you're learning in the course, communicate with each other on a consistent basis, and "bounce" ideas back and forth as we move from topic to topic (think of it as a blog for our class). I will post approximately five (5) topics over the course of the summer (I also will post an announcement when a topic has been posted, but I've also included those dates on the CO 4253/6253 course schedule), and you will have the opportunity to earn a total of **50 points** for offering comments and feedback on the board (In other words, your responses to each topic will be worth up to **10 points**). Topics can include anything from the textbook, class notes, or any current news item that I think is relevant to what you're learning from the course.

You simply click on the "Discussion" function to the left of the course MyCourses home page, and then click the latest topic that has been posted. I will monitor the discussion "threads" to make sure you are contributing to the discussion, and examine the length and

depth of your postings before assigning a point value. If you want full credit for your post, you will need to offer feedback that is thoughtful, on-topic, and detailed enough for me to determine that you are taking this exercise seriously.

Also, don't use the board to attack another person or his or her position. I expect us to disagree, for debate and constructive criticism is the foundation of the persuasive process and a healthy democracy. However, let's remember that we're all adults here. Persuasion involves the careful analysis of another's position, and if you disagree, crafting an argument that is articulate, accurate, and accommodating of other viewpoints.

**NOTE:** Take this aspect of the class seriously, as I will when assessing your contribution to the discussions. If you "blow off" the discussions, your grade will show it. Please let me know if you have any questions (including how to use this function on MyCourses). Deadlines are important! If you do not post your comments by the appropriate deadline, you will not receive credit for that post.

**Theory Application Piece (UNDERGRADUATES ONLY):** For this assignment, you will write a **2-4 page** analysis examining an event from the media (in the news or in film or television entertainment) and/or from your own life using one of the theories discussed in class.

**Ad Analysis (GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY):** For this assignment, you will write a **three (3) page** analysis of two (2) advertisements (for two separate products, one product per ad) targeting a particular demographic group. Then, you will evaluate the effectiveness of each ad (how well you think the ads target their demographic group chosen), analyze the ads' ideological messages, and discuss how that brand (or product), and the ad framed around it, reinforces the ideals and assumptions of the consumer culture (a concept you will encounter in this course). More details will be given later.

**Book Review (GRADUATE STUDENTS ONLY):** For this assignment, you will be asked to read a book of your choosing that deals with any aspect of the persuasive process, and prepare a **3-5 page** critique summarizing the book's main ideas, its strengths, and weaknesses.

**NOTE:** All book titles must meet my approval. Please see course schedule for the deadline to have your choice of book approved.

**Thank You For Smoking Analysis (BOTH UNDERGRADUATES AND GRADUATE STUDENTS):** For this assignment, you will watch the film, *Thank You For Smoking*, which highlights many of the ethical issues involved in persuasive activities (lobbying, advertising, product placement, selling, and the use of evidence). Then, you will write a **4-6 page** analysis identifying the "truths" about persuasion, advertising, lobbying, etc. evident in the film, and critique the ethical conduct of the film's main characters.

**NOTE:** This is an upper division communication course, so I expect you to be able to express yourself in a clear and articulate manner. Accordingly, all written assignments

will be graded for accuracy, depth of analysis, examples used, citation of sources (if applicable), and for the quality of writing. More details for each written assignment will be posted on MyCourses at a later date (click the link “CO 4253/6253 Written Assignments”).

**NOTE:** All written assignments will be submitted via turnitin.com. This service electronically scans your paper and checks it against other papers that have been turned in to turnitin.com, against papers that are available on the Internet (to make sure you haven’t purchased or downloaded a paper), and against the various source material that is available on the Internet and other digital sources. In other words, this service will check your paper for both obvious and inadvertent evidence of plagiarism.

So, it’s important to make sure your work is your own and to make sure you document your work according to either APA or MLA style. Plagiarism, whether turning in a paper that is not yours, taking portions of material that you have found online and “cut and pasted” it into your paper, turning in a paper that you’ve written for another class, or failing to cite any outside sources that you use in your paper, will be dealt with (and harshly so) according to the MSU Academic Honor Code. At the very least, you will receive a **ZERO** for the assignment in question.

If you have any questions about how to cite any source for your written assignments, it is important to ask me before the assignment is due—for the punishment may be severe (and saying, “I didn’t know that was plagiarism” will not win you any favors). Please make sure you read and understand the MSU Honor Code and abide by it accordingly (for more details on the Honor Code, see pages 10-11 of this syllabus).

Finally, make sure you submit your assignments to Turnitin.com by the deadline. There is a link on the CO 4253/6253 MyCourses page for this purpose. Simply click that link, then click on the link for the assignment in question. Then, you will be asked to give your paper a title and upload the paper to service (it’s much like attaching a Word document to an e-mail).

Again, submit your papers by the deadline—failure to do this (without my permission) will result in you getting a **ZERO** for the assignment in question—even if it is complete!

Late or Missed Assignments: All exams and quizzes are to be taken on the dates assigned and written assignments are to be turned in on deadline. Please consult the CO 4253/6253 course schedule (located on the course MyCourses home page) for specific exam dates and deadlines for quizzes and written assignments. I understand that illness and unforeseen circumstances will occur. Therefore, the guidelines for “make-ups” are as follows:

(1) If you unable to take an exam during the time it is to be proctored, or you do not turn in an assignment on the day it is due—and you do not have a documented, valid excuse (see the next page)—you will receive a **ZERO** for that exam or assignment in question. If



you do have a documented excuse, the exam or assignment should be made up at first opportunity (see below).

You have **one week** from the time of your absence to present me with the written excuse and to make-up up the exam or turn in the written assignment (you can fax all relevant documentation verifying your “absence” to me). Otherwise, you will receive a **ZERO** for the exam or assignment in question. I reserve the right to deny any student the opportunity to take a make-up exam if I am not contacted in the aforementioned time frame, or if I doubt your reasons for missing an exam or assignment.

**NOTE:** Remember, you have one week to take each quiz, and they cannot be made up for any reason.

(2) I understand that many of you are taking this class around your busy schedules. However, this does not mean that you should shirk your duties as a student, and miss important deadlines and dates. Keep in contact, and let me know of any problems or conflicts immediately. Regardless, please remember that it is your responsibility to meet all deadlines.

Only the following cases are considered excused absences:

(a) **ILLNESS:** Official documentation by doctor, emergency room, hospital, or other medical personnel. This can be faxed to me directly @ (662) 325-3210. Please also notify me, if possible, by e-mail or phone that you are ill and that I should be expecting documentation to that effect as soon as possible (Of course, you only need to do this if an illness has caused you to miss a deadline). If I doubt the authenticity of the excuse, I reserve the right to call the doctor or hospital in question. If said excuse is determined to be fake, you will receive an “F” for the test or written assignment in question. You will also be reported to the proper MSU authorities for violating the MSU Honor Code Policy (see pages 10-11).

(b) **MSU RELATED ACTIVITIES:** field trips, band trips, team trips, etc. This type of activity is scheduled in advance; therefore you **MUST** make prior arrangements with me for make-up work to be allowed. Documentation before said events is required as well unless I say otherwise.

(c) **OTHER:** There are occasions which arise which do not fit the above categories, but may be verified by a person in authority: death in the family, extreme illness, court summons, etc. Documentation may be required and is subject to my acceptance. I make the final and only determination in considering whether or not such absences should be recorded as “excused” or “unexcused,” and I take these on a case-by-case basis.

Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty: A fundamental expectation of this course is that you will complete your own work. Cheating leaves you vulnerable to academic misconduct charges, so strive to be academically and intellectually honest in your work.

Plagiarism occurs when you claim someone else's ideas or work as your own. In many work places, plagiarism is a basis for firing an employee. At the university level, you can be dismissed for plagiarism.

Plagiarism occurs when you:

- (1) directly quote information without using quotation marks and citing the source in the text.
- (2) use a source for information or ideas and fail to list the source in a reference page.
- (3) paraphrase information or ideas and not citing the source in the text.
- (4) allow someone else to write sections of your paper.
- (5) download a paper or pieces of a paper from the Internet and claim the work as your own.

To prevent most instances of plagiarism, you must do the following:

- (1) purchase (or borrow) an APA or MLA style manual. Copies should be available in your local library reference section or for sale at your local bookstore. APA and MLA guidelines should also be available online.
- (2) provide me with a list of the sources you used for any written assignments.

**NOTE:** If you are unsure as to whether or not you are properly citing a source, please ask me for advice. Ignorance, in this case at least, is not bliss. If you violate any of these rules, fail to use an APA or MLA style manual as needed for written assignments, fail to properly cite your information following APA or MLA style, fail to provide me with a list of sources, I have the right to give you a failing grade on your paper, and to enforce the university policy on academic dishonesty. See the honor code below.

Academic Honor Code: MSU's Honor Code applies to all students and reads in part:

“As a Mississippi State University student I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, you, as a student, immediately assume a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information please visit:

<http://students.msstate.edu/honorcode/>

**NOTE:** Each student must send me an e-mail by the end of the first full week of class (**Friday, January 11**) stating that he or she has read and will abide by the following statement:

“I have read and understand the conditions presented in the CO 4253/6253 course syllabus and schedule. I accept responsibility for any and all information presented in the syllabus as it relates to my performance and conduct in this online course. As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do. I will follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code, and I understand and accept the consequences if I do not.”

Students with Disabilities: MSU, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, will make every reasonable accommodation for students with special learning needs, including hearing and visual impairments, diagnosed learning disabilities, and other classifications of disability specified in the Act. If you wish assistance under the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, please contact me as soon as possible.

Sample