CMGT 509
Influential Communication in the Marketplace

Taught on Contract for
Annenberg School for Communication
University of Southern California

Monday 3:30-6:20pm, starting January 12 2015
Room: ASC (Annenberg) 331 (map)
www.workingpsychology.com/cmgt509.html

Texts & Resources

- **Main Text**: The Dynamics of Persuasion, Fifth Edition, by Richard M. Perloff.
- **Supplemental Readings** for each week will appear in the password-protected online folder (see link top left). They will usually appear about a week before class.

Instructor Info

Dr. Kelton Rhoads. USC Office Room ASC 333. Office hours are before and after class, starting at 2:30 (if you can't find me in the adjunct office, please call on my cell phone; I may be in the library) and lasting after class until students leave. You may also call me at work by phone at any time during normal working hours (9am-5pm). I prefer phone calls and office visits rather than email and texts. As my student, you are my client, and as my client, you can call me! You'll receive my phone numbers in class.

Course Description

This course examines persuasive communication strategies and influence tactics that may be employed in the marketplace of products or ideas--particularly via marketing, public relations, crisis communications, and advertising. Typically, persuasive messages in these fields are studied as artistic endeavors, with most practitioners treating the generation of messages as a creative exercise. This class is different in that regard--it seeks to infuse promotional messaging with what is known from the social sciences. It draws on a multidisciplinary literature from marketing, social marketing, advertising, public relations, reputation management, and crisis communications, but is grounded in the social science of communication and psychology. The course concentrates on persuasion and compliance tactics known to the social sciences that may be communicated both interpersonally and through mass-media
venues, with the “sale” of a product, idea, or behavior as the goal. The course will locate and leverage commonly effective strategies and appropriate tactic selection.

Specific objectives of this course include:

- Concepts and a language for understanding influence in the marketplace;
- Skills to create persuasive messages in marketing and advertising communications;
- Knowledge about what separates non-persuasive from persuasive appeals;
- Ability to locate influence tactics along a continuum of social desirability;
- Knowledge of common ethical considerations about influence tactics as they relate to marketing;
- Analytical tools to engage influence strategies most appropriate to a particular situation, product, idea, and time.

**Class Calendar Preview**

(This is an abbreviated version that's current only at the beginning of class, providing an overview of topics covered. For the full & current version with reading assignments and topic details, please download the main calendar from the Online Folder. You'll receive passwords in class.)

**Grades & Guidelines**

**Grades**

Grades will be calculated on these weights:

- First Written Report 12%
- Second Written Report 12%
- Oral Presentation 12%
- Open Book Exam 1, 28%
- Open Book Exam 2, 28%
- Participation & Attendance 8%

**Two Written Reports**

Two written reports are due earlier in the semester. Written reports should be between 2 pages minimum and 4 pages maximum, single spaced. You'll need to make copies, one for each student, and distribute them in class. Please bring actual paper copies to class, don't substitute electronic copies. Each report becomes a reading assignment for all students.

The first report is on an influence campaign that you examine in some detail (most will be on commercial or social action campaigns).

The second report will be on a particular influence tactic or strategy that goes beyond what we cover in class. That is to say: it goes deeper, or examines something we didn't cover in class, or looks at a
particular tactic as it's applied to a specific application.

The first report will be previewed by me, the prof, before you hand it to the class and, depending on the quality of what I receive for the first report, I may invoke the preview rule for the second report, also. So you will need to hand me a physical (on paper) copy of your report one week before you hand it to the class. You'll also need to give me some times I can call you during the following week, and a telephone number. We'll get in touch by phone (not email or text), and we'll discuss. I will likely have some suggestions. There is a (remote) possibility I'll disallow your topic if I think it takes the class in the wrong direction topically. I'm particularly critical of political topics that advocate a partisan position, so be forewarned.

**One Oral Presentation**

In the latter half of the semester, you'll present a topic to the class in a 10-minute presentation to sub-groups of the class (that is, you won't be presenting to the entire class at once). It's just like a written report, except the oral presentation is added to the requirement. (You still need to have a one-sheet handout for the class.) The topic for this presentation is: unintended consequences of campaigns.

For more detail about the reports and presentation, click on the "About Report/Present" link in the top left corner.

**Two Exams**

There will be two open-note, open-text, open computer exams - one at midterm and the second at final. Your computer is allowed for paperless reviewing of PDFs and class notes. It's not to be used during tests for keyword searching, searching the internet, or messaging to or from others. So I have a "no internet, no keyboard" rule for tests. WiFi off, no internet access, and no typing. You may use your touchpad, mouse, or other locating device, but not your keyboard for typing. Please plan appropriately. Tests are open, because this is a graduate course, where memory isn't emphasized—but knowing of the material, and where to find it, is. Exams need to be completed in the time allowed. The exams will concentrate on your knowledge of the material we've covered, and your ability to apply the principles we've learned. You should be familiar with the material assigned as reading, the material presented in lectures, and the material given in student presentations, to do well on the tests. Some of the standardized test questions that come with the textbooks may be used in the construction of tests. See the extensive online exam review page link at top left of this page for more info, titled "About Tests."

From the Registrar: "The current university policy regarding the final examination schedule is: (1) No student in a course with a final examination may omit the final examination or request to take it in advance of the scheduled examination time. (2) All courses must adhere to the final examination schedule." Well--there it is. Check our class calendar for the time and date of the final exam early in the
Participation

Your participation score is gauged from your other scores in class, but can modify your overall score up or down, based on the quality of your participation. To get high participation scores:

(1) Please show up on time and pay attention. Being on time is especially important in classrooms that have no convenient back door. I do keep attendance, but I recognize that you may not be able to attend every class, so there is some leeway--less leeway in classes that meet less frequently. I want you to make every effort to be in class on days you are assigned to present, and on exam dates. Please don't skip these particular days of class unless you're sick. If you attend class, please show up on time.

Internet access: When I have allowed students full internet access during class, I've gotten some of my lowest test scores ever. Humans are not good at splitting attention, so during lectures & discussions, turn your internet access off, turn your cell phone off, and please attend to the discussions we're having.

(2) Participate during discussions and exercises. High-quality comments are requested of students that:

- Offer an informed, studied, constructive, relevant perspective;
- Contribute to moving discussion and analysis forward, rather than diverting or distracting from it;
- Include evidence or logic. Comments need to go beyond “I liked…” and “I didn’t like…” which are mere opinions and therefore of secondary concern in a social science class.
- Avoid partisanship. Please don't attempt to recruit for your ideology in this class, or make snarky comments about other people's belief systems, candidates, etc.
- Stay on topic. Questions and comments should be on-topic, not diverge into other areas that are perhaps interesting, but off-topic. Beware discussions of Hollywood shenanigans, which seems to be a perpetual vortex here in Los Angeles.

Class Policies

Class policies are found under the "Take This Class?" link at the top left of this page. Please read the policies in their entirety and be certain you are comfortable with them before you decide to take this class. Also review the online folder weekly for assignments and announcements.

Full is Full...
The administration instructs us: "If a class that you are teaching is full, please do not grant permission to any students to add the course to their schedule. Unfortunately, many of our rooms are already scheduled to their maximum capacity. In addition, we have set many of our class capacities at certain levels in order to keep class sizes more manageable."