"Know your audience." "Know your enemy."

**Required Text:**

**Recommended but not required:**

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**
This course is an introduction to the infinitely complex phenomenon of persuasion. There are three basic objectives for the course:
- Understand the basic theories of persuasion, and be familiar with the research findings.
- Demonstrate understanding of persuasion processes in a variety of communication contexts.
- Learn to be a critical consumer of persuasive messages.

**COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignments</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In-Class Tests, 4 @ 50 pts.</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analyses of persuasive messages, 3 @ 30 pts.</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-Class Exercises (8 @ 5 pts.)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Campaign project (in groups): Initial research paper</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final paper</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>400</td>
<td>100%</td>
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</table>

Total accumulated points will equate to the following grades:

- **A** = 360-371
- **B** = 320-334
- **C** = 280-294
- **D** = 0-239

**Points Distribution:**

- **A** = 372-400
- **B** = 335-347
- **C** = 295-307
- **D** = 240-267

- **B +** = 348-359
- **C +** = 308-320
- **D +** = 268-279

Students taking the course S/N must earn at least 300 points to achieve an “S”. An "I" (incomplete) will be given only if a contract for completion is drawn up in advance, and only in situations where at least 70% of the classwork has already been completed.
ASSIGNMENTS

TESTS (50 points each, 200 points total): In-class tests will include multiple choice and short answer questions, and will cover material from both the textbook and classroom lectures. Study guides will be given out before each test, and posted on the Moodle site.

ANALYSES OF PERSUASIVE MESSAGES (90 points total): Throughout the semester, you will be asked to find and analyze three examples of persuasive messages. The purpose of these analyses is to demonstrate your grasp of course concepts in relation to real-life examples. Each analysis is worth a potential 30 points; 5 points will be deducted for every class period late. See pages 4-6 for complete details.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS (40 pts total, 5 pts each): At 8 points in the semester, you will have a group discussion on a designated topic and hand in a sheet summarizing the discussion. Grades will be based on the sheet, but emphasis will be on participation more than output.

CAMPAIGN (70 points total): In groups, you will design an "anti-advertising" campaign employing persuasion techniques you have learned in the course. Choose a product, and create a campaign designed to get people not to purchase or use that product. See pages 7-9 for complete details.

OTHER GUIDELINES

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is not part of the grade for this class; however, if you miss a class, chances are you will miss either a graded assignment (in-class discussion or test), and/or lecture material that will appear on a test. For any absence, you are responsible for obtaining lecture notes from a classmate. You cannot make up missed tests unless you talk to me in advance or provide written documentation verifying that an emergency prevented you from appearing on the test date.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT: Your instructor assumes that while in this course, you will perform to the utmost of your ability in an honest and sincere manner. Cheating (or intentionally helping someone else cheat), plagiarism (claiming another's words or ideas as your own), or any other form of academic misconduct will result in a severe penalty as outlined in the student handbook. Academic dishonesty will result in no points for the assignment in question, and may result in the offending student's failure in the course.

SPECIAL NEEDS: The University of Minnesota will provide reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities, including learning disabilities, that may affect their capacity to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. If you have any such needs, please talk to me as soon as possible - do not wait until right before (or even after) a test to tell me about your needs. Student athletes must take responsibility to check their travel schedules against the syllabus to look for conflicts, and notify me of schedule conflicts.

Student Mental Health and Stress Management. As a student you may experience a range of issues that can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating and/or lack of motivation. These mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. University of Minnesota services are available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the broad range of confidential mental health services available on campus via http://www.mentalhealth.umn.edu/.
CLASSROOM CONDUCT:

• Turn off cell phones before the beginning of class; please refrain from texting, emailing, tweeting, or any other form of communication to the outside world during class. The studies all show that you just won’t learn if you do that, even if you think you will.

• If there is a persuasion-related issue from current events (political, social, campus-related, etc.) that you would like to discuss in class, bring it to my attention and I will work it into the class discussion.

• If you have concerns about group dynamics for the group assignments, please let me know. I taught Small Group Communication for 15 years, and know that sometimes group issues can interfere with producing the best output possible. The wrong thing to do if you are concerned about group dynamics is to wait until after the project is over to say anything.

• Try following the Responsible Complaint Rule: if you have something to complain about, complain to the people who can actually do something about the problem. It is apparently human nature to complain to everyone but the people who can solve the problem, and as a result many problems that could be solved never are because the relevant parties never hear about them.

GRADING TURNAROUND: On all assignments, our goal is to get the graded assignment back to you promptly – ideally within two weeks. However, it is my philosophy that it's more important to give you a grade you deserve than to give you a grade in a hurry, so grading may sometimes be delayed for that reason.

GRADE DISPUTES: You may dispute any grade you receive, provided you follow these conditions:
• You must submit a written appeal to the instructor explaining your reasons why the grade should be changed
• You attach the assignment to the appeal.
• Your appeal makes a coherent and compelling argument
We can then discuss the grade during office hours (not during class).

EXTRA CREDIT: Any student who gets a letter published in a newspaper, magazine or other edited publication will receive up to 15 points for a letter to the editor of the Minnesota Daily; up to 20 points if it appears in the Star Tribune, Pioneer Press, or other publication outside the University). The letter must be published during the semester in question (i.e. not before the beginning of the class or after the last test period), and may only be awarded once per student. Point values for getting an argument published in a new media is negotiable, but you can’t earn points for anything posted on YouTube, Facebook, or your own blog since they don’t involve editorial review.
ANALYSES OF PERSUASIVE MESSAGES

On the designated dates, hand in a paper analyzing a persuasive message of some kind. If you can, include the original message or a link to where you found it - if it is in a form that cannot be included (i.e. television ad or a conversation), write a detailed description of the message. The primary purpose of the analysis is to demonstrate your understanding of, and ability to apply, course concepts. In each case, you must find the sample to analyze yourself – choose carefully. Conduct the analysis by answering the questions supplied. **Please answer the questions in order, and label them (i.e. "3b")**.

Each analysis will be worth a potential 30 points; 5 points will be deducted for every class period late. The analyses which receive the highest grades tend to be those that choose good messages to analyze, examine the message in detail, use concepts appropriately, and get at the heart of the persuasive strategies. Analyses that examine the message on only a surface level, use only the most basic concepts, or use the concepts inappropriately (i.e. demonstrate that you do not, in fact, understand the theory you are attempting to use) receive lower grades.

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**Analysis #1: Workplace/university message.** This can be memos, instructions/guidelines (as long as they are persuasive, not just instructive), propaganda, recruiting pitches, promotional materials, warnings, etc. You can also use stories of personal conversations with bosses, co-workers or teachers, speeches you heard, etc. The defining element is that it must be directed at you as an employee or student (not you as a customer, voter, etc.).

First, describe the message and the context in which you found it. Then answer these questions, in order:

1. a. Which of the 5 steps in Yale "single-shot" model of persuasion did the Source address well? (i.e. had a great attention-getter, or helped you remember the message).
   b. Which of the 5 steps did S not address as effectively? (i.e. message is incomprehensible, or didn't clearly state what action they want you to do).

2. In terms of the ELM, do you think the source was encouraging central or peripheral processing? What makes you think so? Be specific.

3. a. How does the context/background factor into the message? Is there any background information that changes your interpretation of the message?
   b. What is not being said? (i.e. what is deliberately left out of the message?)
   c. Are there any competing messages the author directly or indirectly addresses?
      *(NOTE: This does not refer to contradictions within the message; it refers to messages the audience receives from other sources. EXAMPLES: (1) written workplace messages often sound strict and rigid, but in person the authority figures may tell you that those rules don't really apply or the deadlines aren't strict; (2) an authority figure tries to present a certain view of the organization [e.g. "Safety is our #1 concern"], but the environment contradicts that view)*

4. Do you think there are any ethical violations in the message? If so, what violations? (If not, at least give an indication that you thought the ethical issues through thoroughly).

5. Did you see the use of any consistency theories (balance theory, associations, cognitive dissonance) in action? How were they employed?

6. a. Overall, what made the message effective?
   b. Overall, what made the message ineffective? (Answer both questions)
**Analysis #2: Political Message.** You can define “political message” broadly – it may include campaign literature or speeches by political figures (from presidential candidates to local politicians), pages from candidates' websites, opinion pieces in newspapers, TV shows, blogs or websites that espouse a particular candidate or point of view, or literature from groups with a particular political goal (such as www.NORML.org, www.ProLife.org, an environmental group, anti-immigration group, a group against health care reform, etc). In terms of length, look for a single piece that is roughly 300-900 words/1-5 minutes long - not just a letter to an editor or short blog rant on a tiny pet peeve, but also not an entire website or hourlong speech. I do not recommend using an interview, just because it is too difficult to identify who the "author" is (the interviewer, or the interviewee). Also be aware that analyzing older messages (i.e. before you were born) will make it difficult to answer the context questions (2c, 3a)

Please print and include the message if possible; for YouTube clips, provide both the URL (www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGGAgljengs) and search terms (“Christine O'Donnell: I'm You”).

1. a. Who is the target audience? Why do you say so?  
   b. How narrowly focused is the audience? (i.e. do they only appeal the “core” audience, or do they attempt to reach out to others as well?) What do they say about (or to) the hostile audience?

2. a. How does the candidate or author establish credibility? Identify a number of techniques (including nonverbal elements, if relevant).  
   b. What hurts the candidate/author's credibility?  
   c. Is there any background information or factors related to where the message appears that influence credibility?

3. a. Are there any competing messages from other sources the author directly or indirectly addresses? (This can be either in the form of opponents' messages, or negative information about the candidate or issue.)  
   b. How does the author address those competing messages? Does the author use inoculation or forewarning? How?

4. What emotional appeals are contained in the message? Be specific.

5. What linguistic techniques can you identify from chapter 7 - ultimate terms, labels, euphemisms, vividness, powerless or powerful language? How well are they used?

6. a. Overall, what makes the message effective? (in terms of content, situation, etc.)  
   b. What makes the message ineffective?
Analysis #3: Sales Pitch. The particular format for the persuasive situation is once again up to you: in-store salesperson, phone solicitation, TV infomercial, spam email, panhandler on the street, pressure from a friend or co-worker. The only two criteria are:

a) the intent of the message is to get you to part with your money (buy a product or service, or donate to a cause) and;

b) the "sales pitch" is sufficiently long to be worth analyzing (i.e. not a print ad with fewer than 30 words on it – As a rule, the shorter the ad, the harder it is to analyze).

It could even be a sales pitch you yourself made to someone else (for example, trying to get your parents to give you their old car, asking for a raise from your boss, or trying to persuade a friend to go in on a business deal with you). If you can't find a good sample to analyze, head over to a car dealership or wander into the appliance department at Sears.

If you use a printed message, please include it. For YouTube clips, provide both the URL (www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZeJZs2fdYo), and search terms ("Comfort Wipe").

ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

1. What emotional and/or values appeals did S use?

2. What linguistic techniques did you notice? (i.e., ultimate terms, labels, euphemisms, vividness, powerless or powerful language, or other elements from Chapter 7)

3. Was the argument two-sided? How did S address the opposing arguments or downsides of the product/idea? What did S use to answer those concerns?
   If S did not use a two-sided approach, what concerns were you, R, thinking of? (If you were S, what issues were you concerned about, even if you did not say anything about them)

4. What compliance-gaining or sequential persuasion techniques did S use? How well did they use them?
   For instance, did S's strategy change over time in response to R's reactions?

5. What consistency theories from Chapter 3 did S employ? (balance theory, associations, cognitive dissonance)?
   How were they used?

6. What visual elements (intentional or unintentional) have an impact on the message?

7. a. What made the sales pitch effective?
   b. What made the sales pitch ineffective?
ANTI-ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN
Assignment Sheet

Your group will function as a marketing group for a neutral organization (such as the U.S. Dept. of Health, or a non-profit organization), and your goal is to design a campaign that resembles an advertising campaign but has the opposite purpose: instead of encouraging people to use a product, your goal is to get them not to use a certain product. Think of the anti-tobacco messages you may have seen; pick another (legal, commonly advertised) product and create an effective message to counteract the advertising for it.

PRODUCT: Choose a specific product that is currently being advertised. Your goal is not to wipe that product off the market, which would probably be a hopeless cause. You can set your own goal: try to convince people not to buy that product, use less of it, or have realistic expectations about what the product can and can't do, or the downsides of the product. You may find that a simpler, more modest goal works better than an overly ambitious one. The choice of product is up to you, within these restrictions:

- Do not choose tobacco or alcohol
- Choose only something that is currently being advertised. For instance, do not choose illegal drugs, since there is no television campaign telling you to use drugs.
- Do not choose Subway restaurants, so I can show you a sample anti-advertising campaign focused on Subway.
- Keep in mind that if you choose a product that is already heavily criticized (for example, Hydroxycut), you can assume your audience doesn't care about those criticisms. If they are health conscious they wouldn't use Hydroxycut, so think about what they do care about instead.
- If it is an essential kind of product, think about the alternatives issue. If your message is "Don't drink Coca Cola" that's not an issue, but if the message is "Don't use toothpaste," then what are they supposed to do instead, and how is it going to work advocating that alternative?

Be as realistic as possible. For instance, do not try to convince people that a product they use every day is going to kill them in the near future. For this exercise, do not worry about being sued (for slander, libel) provided you do not make false statements. Assume you have a budget that would be realistic for a govt. agency or non-profit organization: not huge, not tiny.

Using what you've learned about campaigns and advertising, design a TV commercial and a print advertisement. Since you do not have access to a TV studio, you can either re-enact a commercial in the classroom (preferred), or use whatever equipment you have to record it. Lack of sophistication won't matter—the grade is based on the thought and content of the paper, not on the appearance of the actual ad. Keep in mind: even if you have the equipment, filming the ad can take up a lot of your time, time which is probably better spent thinking through your strategy. The print ad can also be crude; what matters is design, not execution. Most importantly, answer the questions on the question sheet on “Anti-Ad Campaign Questionnaire” (see page 9).

As an early step, your group should write a short (1-2 page) paper researching the product you are attacking, how it is currently being advertised, and who is already critical of the product. See Step b) on the next page for details.

Altogether, that means there will be four things your group must do:

1. Write up the research summary several weeks in advance (check schedule)
2. Design the print ad
3. Re-enact (or film) the TV commercial
4. Write up the answers to the questionnaire. (Grading is primarily based on #4).
STEPS:

a) Choose a product (think carefully about it and reach a group consensus). Inform me of your topic by **October 28**. You can make minor adjustments to the topic later.

b) Hand in the 1-2 page research paper on **November 13**. This is a group paper (just one per group, worth 10 points), that should answer three questions:
   1. How is the product currently being advertised? (What kind of advertising are you trying to counteract?)
   2. What is bad about the product you are attacking? (physical or social harms, flaws with it, or reasons it doesn't work)
   3. Who is critical of it? What organizations or sources are out there on your side, that you can draw on to strengthen your credibility? List those sources in the paper.

c) Think through the campaign strategies, challenges, etc. THIS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT STEP, AND IS WHAT YOU SHOULD SPEND MOST OF YOUR TIME ON.

d) Design and produce the print ad based on strategies you came up with in step c).

e) Write up your answers to the questionnaire (worth 60 points), and bring with you on your presentation date. I strongly recommend you review the handout “Some Advice About the Group Paper” first.

f) On **December 16**, your group will either re-enact the TV commercial that you would film if you had access to a TV studio, or bring a pre-filmed ad with you (aim for 30-60 seconds). Your group paper is due at the time of your presentation.

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS:
When presenting your ad in class, you have two options, but each has a requirement. Failing to meet these requirements will result in a 5-point deduction in the group grade.

- **Option 1**: Act out the ad in a live skit (recommended)
  Requirement: Hand in a script of the skit. It can be crudely handwritten on scraps of paper, neatly typed up, or whatever you’ve got. The reason I want the script is to help me remember what was in the skit later.

- **Option 2**: Film the ad in advance. If you do, please pay careful attention to these restrictions.
  Requirements: Bring the filmed ad on a flash drive/jump drive, or post it on YouTube (or similar website). If it is a file you email to yourself, make sure to retrieve it before class begins. You may use my laptop to play it.
  DO NOT: bring an aged laptop expecting it to play properly. It may not work, and I don’t want to waste time hooking up one laptop after another. If you’re not sure about your laptop, bring it to class a day or two in advance.
  DO: Test the video out in advance; there may be unforeseen reasons it doesn’t play.
  DO: Leave a copy on my hard drive or browser history so that I can view it again later.

**KEEP IN MIND**: You don't need to worry that a skit will be less impressive than a pre-filmed ad, or will earn a lower grade. It's all about the concepts, not how polished the finished product looks. The grade is based on the paper, not the ad - the only reason I may want to check the ad (or the script) again is to see if the concepts you want to convey are actually contained in the ad. It doesn't do any good to come up with lots of important ideas but then make an ad that doesn't actually contain those ideas.
ANTI-AD CAMPAIGN DESIGN QUESTIONNAIRE
This is an exercise intended to employ specific persuasion tactics to influence the target audience. Answer these concrete questions about your campaign goals, strategies, and tactics. Think these questions through carefully, and type up a detailed set of answers (roughly 4-7 pages), to be submitted on your presentation date, worth 60 points.

1. What is your goal? What exactly is the message you intend to convey, and/or the behavior you want the audience to do or not do?
   - Sample goals could include, but are not limited to:  
     - Don't buy the product or use the service  
     - Use that product or service less than you do now  
     - Lower your expectations of what the product/service can accomplish  
     - Recognize the downside, risk or harms of the product/service

2. Who is your target audience? Identify the target audience in terms of attitudes, values, life experiences, or demographics. The first two—attitudes and values—are the most important.

3. a. What do you see as your major challenge? How will you address that challenge? How will you avoid backlash or resistance to your persuasive message?
   - 3b. How will you combat the existing advertising/marketing for the product? What do you think makes the existing advertising for that product effective? How will you counter that?

4. In general, what forms of persuasion (emotional, logic, credibility, consistency theories, etc.) will you rely on most heavily?
   - 4a. Are you trying to encourage central processing, or peripheral processing?
   - 4b. What specific emotional appeals will you rely on? If you use fear appeals, how will you address issues of perceived vulnerability and efficacy?
   - 4c. What associations (positive or negative) do you intend to draw?
   - 4d. Which of the Compliance-Gaining Tactics do you use? How?

5. How will you establish credibility and legitimacy? (Identify particular techniques - do not just assume you have credibility automatically)

6. What makes your message sticky? Identify particular techniques you used to address all six of the “SUCCES” factors.

7. Recap how your television commercial meets the criteria you describe on this questionnaire, tying your answer directly to the earlier questions. Make sure that the strategies you outlined in the paper show up in the actual ad (for instance, it doesn't do any good to research the specific harms of the product, but then produce an ad that just says "It'll kill you" without explaining why. If you want the audience to know the harms, you have to tell them).

8. Recap how the print ad meets the criteria. (Same issues as #7)

Type up the answers to these questions in a written document, submitted on the day of your presentation. Grading is based primarily on this document.

Grading criteria:
- how thoroughly you address these questions
- how logical and consistent the answers are (watch out for contradictions)
- how realistic your campaign is
- how well your ideas incorporate concepts from the textbook and classroom discussion.
# CLASS SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TOPIC/CLASSROOM ACTIVITY</th>
<th>READINGS DUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>W 9/9</td>
<td>Introduction to the class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9/11</td>
<td>Student introductions / basic concepts</td>
<td>Ch. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 9/14</td>
<td>Basic concepts / resistance to persuasion</td>
<td>Ch. 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/16</td>
<td>History of persuasion research</td>
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<tr>
<td>F 9/18</td>
<td>The Yale model of persuasion / ethics</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9/21</td>
<td>Ethics</td>
<td>pp. 357-365 (Ch. 16)</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/23</td>
<td>Facts &amp; evidence</td>
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<td>F 9/25</td>
<td>Facts &amp; evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>M 9/28</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td>Ch. 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 9/30</td>
<td>Attitudes</td>
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<td>F 10/2</td>
<td>Consistency theories</td>
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<td>M 10/5</td>
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<tr>
<td>W 10/7</td>
<td><strong>TEST 1 (covering Ch. 1, 2, 3, 16 + lectures)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>F 10/9</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Ch. 4 + p. 366</td>
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<td>M 10/12</td>
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<td>W 10/14</td>
<td>Deception</td>
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<td>F 10/16</td>
<td>Deception: Lying game</td>
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<td>M 10/19</td>
<td>Communicator characteristics</td>
<td>Ch. 5 + p. 367</td>
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<td>Audience analysis</td>
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<td>F 10/23</td>
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<td>M 10/26</td>
<td>Group influence</td>
<td>Ch. 6</td>
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<td>W 10/28</td>
<td>Group influence</td>
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<td>F 10/30</td>
<td>Fear appeals</td>
<td>Ch. 13 + pp. 370-373</td>
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<td>M 11/2</td>
<td><strong>TEST 2 (covering Ch. 4, 5, 6, 12 &amp; 13 + lectures)</strong></td>
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<td>W 11/4</td>
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<td>F 11/6</td>
<td>Structuring messages / inoculation</td>
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<td>F 11/13</td>
<td>Language</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Initial research paper for Campaign Project due</strong></td>
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<td>M 11/16</td>
<td>Compliance gaining</td>
<td>Ch. 11</td>
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<td>W 11/18</td>
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<td>F 11/20</td>
<td>Sequential persuasion</td>
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<td>M 11/23</td>
<td>TEST 3 (covering Ch. 7, 9-11)</td>
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<td>Media &amp; persuasion</td>
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<td>Media &amp; persuasion</td>
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<td>Advertising</td>
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<td>F 12/4</td>
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<td>W 12/9</td>
<td>Visual persuasion</td>
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<td>F 12/11</td>
<td>Persuasion issues in the news</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M 12/14</td>
<td>Esoteric persuasion</td>
<td>Ch. 15 + p. 374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W 12/16</td>
<td>Presentations. GROUP PAPERS DUE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Saturday 12/19, 10:30 am**

| TEST 4 (covering Ch. 14, 15 & lectures) |                     |