



**The University of Hong Kong
Faculty of Business and Economics**

**BUSI2819: Persuasion and Behavioral Change
Syllabus**

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course aims at providing a systematic introduction of concepts, theories and practices in persuasion, from the perspectives of social psychology and communication, with a focus on equipping students with the ability of applying persuasion knowledge in various business and interpersonal contexts. Classic theories in persuasion, attitude change, and behavior change, together with practical frameworks will be introduced before drawing connection to the business examples. Students will practice persuasion via developing strategic planning for business cases and conducting persuasive writings and presentations.

Learning Objectives:

1. To provide students with exposure to basic and classic theories in persuasion, attitude, and behavior change;
2. To introduce students with current empirical studies in persuasion, attitude and behavior change;
3. To develop students' ability to apply persuasion theories to various business and interpersonal contexts;
4. To equip students with skills in persuasive writing and presentation;
5. To increase students' leadership by enhancing their power of influence and effective communication skills.

II. COURSE MATERIALS:

Text-book:

Frymier, A. B. (2018). *Persuasion: Integrating theory, research and practice*. Kendall Hunt Publishing.

Cialdini, R. B. (2009). *Influence: Science and practice*. Pearson Education.

Required readings:

Chapter. 1 from Heath, C., & Heath, D. (2010). *Three surprises about change*. From C. Heath & D. Heath, *Switch* (Ch. 1). Crown Business.

Selected chapters from Locker, K. O., & Kienzler, D. S. (2009). *Business and administrative communication*. McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Other academic articles and selected cases from Harvard Business Publishing.

III. INTENDED COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (CLOs)

Through applying and integrating knowledge in business communication acquired from the above teaching and learning tools, the following Learning Outcomes may be expected:

- CLO1: Describe and explain basic concepts and classic theories in persuasion in oral as well as in written forms;
- CLO2: Articulate the connection between persuasion theories and real life phenomena in business context;
- CLO3: Apply persuasion strategies and influence tools to specific business problems as reflected in written proposal, presentation, and campaign design;
- CLO4: Master effective persuasive writing and presentation skills in typical communication settings in an international business context.

IV. ALIGNMENTS OF INTENDED FACULTY LEARNING GOALS & COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Faculty Learning Goals	CLOs
1. Acquisition and internalization of knowledge and skills in key functional areas	1, 2, 3, 4
2. Application and integration of business knowledge	1, 2, 3, 4
3. Inculcating professionalism	2, 3, 4
4. Developing global outlook	4
5. Mastering communication skills	1, 2, 3, 4
6. Cultivating leadership	1, 2, 3, 4

V. ASSESSMENT

Persuasion Theory Review and Application (Individual) (WL)	40%
Case Presentation - Persuasive Proposal (Group) (OL)	40%
Class Participation	20%
Total	100%

1. Theory review and application. You will need to find a human behaviour/persuasion phenomenon of your interest and try to identify the existing folk and/or scientific theories to explain the phenomenon. You may also come up with your own version of the explanation/theory for the phenomena and see how it can be tested and further applied. This work is worth 40% of your course grade.

Focus: CLO1, 2, 3, 4

2. Presentations. You will need to work in a group to conduct a presentation regarding a change proposal. You will work with the group to brainstorm and discuss the topic and presentation methods, practice. The presentation takes 20-25 minutes. All team members need to be involved in the presentation. Use presentation strategies we discuss in class to enrich the content and to generate attitude or behavioral change. Your speech will be graded on a group basis, as well as on each member's individual contributions. You will also be responsible for providing feedback to other groups' presentations and conduct peer performance review for your team members and your own work. The presentation is worth 40% of your course grade.

Focus: CLO1, 2, 3, 4

Please note: Detailed instructions for the assignments will be distributed in class on the days when they are assigned.

3. Class participation. All class members are expected to read the materials (readings or cases) assigned for each class meeting. Participants need to contribute to the class discussion throughout the term: 1) share with the class your ideas, viewpoints, and experiences; 2) ask and answer questions; 3) conduct summary and sharing on designated chapters of the “Influence” book, and so on. The quality and quantity of your discussion participation throughout the term is worth 20% of your course grade.

Focus: CLO1, 2, & 4

VI. COURSE GRADING DESCRIPTOR

Grade	Course Grade Descriptor
A+, A, A-	Strong evidence of superb ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate and synthesis, both in oral and written forms.
B+, B, B-	Strong evidence of ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at all levels of learning: describe, apply, evaluate and synthesis, in oral and written forms.
C+, C, C-	Evidence of adequate ability to fulfill the intended learning outcomes of the course at low levels of learning; such as describe and apply, but not at high levels of learning such as evaluate and synthesis, as reflected in written or oral form.
D+, D	Evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.
F	Little evidence of basic familiarity with the subject.

VII. STUDY LOAD

Course Teaching and Learning Activities	Expected Study Hours	Study Load (% of study)
T&L1. Interactive lectures	39	32.5%
T&L2. Group project, case analysis and homework	40	33.3%
T&L3. Self study	41	34.2%
Total	120	100%

VIII. COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance: Attendance and participation are vital if you are to do well in this course and enhance your effective business communication skills. Students who miss THREE classes without legitimate documentations will receive a warning letter from the faculty. Not meeting attendance requirement may result in a failure for this course.

Four legitimate excuses for missing class: illness, religious observance, participation in University activities at the request of the University authorities, or compelling circumstances beyond the student's control. Written documentations will not be accepted after the 7th calendar day after the due day, at which time the lateness/absence will be considered unexcused. In the case of an emergency, you are responsible for contacting your instructor as soon as possible.

Late Assignment Policy: Because presentation is conducted in front of the whole class, there will be no make-up presentations. All presentations need to be conducted at their scheduled time slot. For the formal business report, for every calendar day that the assignment is late, 20% of the assignment grade (e.g., lose 6 points for a 30-point assignment) will be deducted. Except for illness or other emergencies, any student expecting to miss a course deadline must have the approval from instructor *prior to* the assignment due date. Failure to turn in an assignment on time without explicit exemption by the instructor may result in a grade of ZERO for the assignment.

Academic Integrity: plagiarism in assigned work will result in a score of zero in that assignment, and a potential failure of the entire course. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: quoting scholarly materials without acknowledgement; and turning in work completed by another person but represented to be your own.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: Appropriate academic accommodations will be provided to students with documented disabilities. Please provide the official documentation by the end of the second week of class. Academic accommodations will not be provided without official documentation.

Tentative Schedule

ANY NECESSARY CHANGES WILL BE ANNOUNCED AND A REVISED SCHEDULE DISTRIBUTED

DATE	TOPICS	READINGS and ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 1		
Session 1	Course Introduction.	Syllabus
Session 2	Basic issues in persuasion – Basic distinctions. Activity: Class sharing on persuasive phenomenon (OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp.1</i> <i>Cialdini, Cp. 1</i>
WEEK 2		
Session 1	Basic issues in persuasion – Concepts and measures. Activity: Exercise on measuring attitude related concepts and group discussion (WL/OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 2</i>
Session 2	Attitude-Behaviour Connection.	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 3</i>
WEEK 3		
Session 1	Persuasion Theories and Practices - Social Judgement.	
Session 2	Persuasion Theories and Practices - Social Judgement. Activity: Class discussion on phenomena to which the theory may apply (OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 7 & 8</i> Group formation
WEEK 4		
Session 1	Persuasion Theories and Practices – Discrepancy Model. Activity: Class discussion on phenomena to which the theory may apply (OL)	<i>Additional readings on discrepancy models (Moodle)</i>
Session 2	Persuasion Theories and Practices - Consistency and Cognitive Dissonance. Activity: Class discussion on phenomena to which the theory may apply (OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 9</i>
WEEK 5		

Session 1	Persuasion Theories and Practices: Self-Perception.	
Session 2	Persuasion Theories and Practices: Reasoned Actions and Planned Behavior. Activity: Class discussion on phenomena to which the theory may apply (OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 10</i>
WEEK 6		
Session 1	Persuasion Theories and Practices - Elaboration Likelihood Model. Activity: Class discussion on phenomena to which the theory may apply (OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 11</i> <u>Assign: Theory Review and Application</u>
Session 2	Theory Application Exercise (In-class sharing) (OL).	
WEEK 7		
Session 1	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Influence Group presentation on selected topics of influence (OL)	<i>Cialdini, Cp. 1 (Group 7) & Cp. 2 (Group 4)</i>
Session 2	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Influence Group presentation on selected topics of influence (OL)	<i>Cialdini, Cp. 3 (Group 2) & Cp. 4 (Group 1)</i>
WEEK 8		
Session 1	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Influence Group presentation on selected topics of influence (OL)	<i>Cialdini, Cp. 5 (Group 6)</i>
Session 2	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Influence Group presentation on selected topics of influence (OL)	<i>Cialdini, Cp. 6 (Group 3) & Cp. 7 (Group 5)</i>
WEEK 9		
Session 1	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Switch	<i>“Switch” Cp. 1</i> <i>Due: Theory Review and Application.</i> <u>Assign: Persuasive Proposal Presentation</u>

Session 2	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Switch Activity: Change proposal based on the "Switch" framework and group sharing (WL/OL)	
WEEK 10		
Session 1	Influence and behavior change in organizations and commercial settings - Switch	
Session 2	Persuasive messages in oral and written form - Source Factors	<i>Locker & Kienzler, Cp. 11</i> <i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 4 & 5</i>
WEEK 11		
Session 1	Persuasive messages in oral and written form - Content and Styles	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 11</i>
Session 2	Ethics in Persuasion Activity: Class discussion and debate on persuasion ethics (OL)	<i>Frymier & Nadler, Cp. 13</i>
WEEK 12		
Session 1	Group Presentation (OL)	
Session 2	Group Presentation (OL)	Group 6, 3, & 7
WEEK 13		
Session 1	Group Presentation (OL)	Group 4
Session 2	Group Presentation and Class Summary (OL)	Group 5, 1, & 2

Assignment: Persuasion Theory

Due:

Requirement:

1. Think of a phenomenon (of persuasion) that interests you and that you would like to find explanation for.
2. Go to a search engine, e.g., Google, and type in the phenomenon you've like to have explained and see what comes up.
3. Is there an explanation for this phenomenon? Are they folk theories or scientific theories?
4. What folk or scientific theory would you use to explain this phenomenon?
5. How might you test this theory to see if it really explains and predicts the phenomenon (e.g., hypothesis, measurement, methods)?
6. What are the strengths and limitations of your theory (in terms of explaining, predicting, and controlling behaviors?)

Structure:

1. Describe the phenomenon;
2. Discuss the existing explanation/theory or based on which, propose your own theory or expansion of the theory;
3. Elaborate the theory (key concepts, how these concepts are connected to provide explanation for the phenomenon, etc.);
4. How the theory can be tested (you can choose test one part of the theory):
 - a. State your expected finding/hypothesis
 - b. Design a simple study for testing the theory
 - c. Come up with questions to ask your participants in the study/experiment (for measuring the concepts)
5. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your theory – How well does the theory do in terms of the power of
 - a. Explaining behaviors
 - b. Predicting behaviors
 - c. Controlling behaviors

Format:

1. Please put your writing into a paper/essay format.
2. Page limit: Double-spaced 5-6 pages (including measurements/scales, but not including cover page, if any, and references); Font size: Times New Roman 12" and page margin 1".
3. Reference style: APA, MLA, or Chicago.
4. This is an individual homework.

Persuasion Theory Grading Rubrics

Grade Level	Rubrics
A+ A A-	<p><u>Content:</u> Strong evidence of a thorough grasp of persuasion concepts and theories; clear identification of phenomena to be addressed; strong arguments provided; and accurate use of scales for measuring concepts (variables) for testing hypothesis; sources/literature is skillfully integrated or synthesized to discuss theoretical concepts or to support findings; strengths and weakness of the proposed theory are discussed.</p> <p><u>Organization</u> Clear outline of main content in the paper; sections of the paper are identifiable and well written (introduction, method, expected results, discussion, conclusion); effective use and phrasing of headings and sub-sections; effective transition.</p> <p><u>Language:</u> All arguments are logical and coherent; writing is always very clear, concise and easy to follow; appropriate use of phrases and grammatical structures; follows the correct font and line spacing requirements.</p> <p><u>Mechanics</u> Follows citation and referencing requirements for in-text citation and reference list; original/reused visuals have a title and are clearly referenced in the text (e.g., As shown in Figure 1)</p>
B+ B B-	<p><u>Content:</u> Evidence of a good grasp of persuasion concepts and theories; In general, clear identification of phenomena to be addressed; mostly strong arguments provided; and mostly accurate use of scales for measuring concepts (variables) for testing hypothesis; sources/literature is integrated or synthesized to discuss theoretical concepts or to support findings; strengths and weakness of the proposed theory are discussed.</p> <p><u>Organization</u> Sections of the paper are identifiable and mostly well written (introduction, method, expected results, discussion, conclusion); in general, effective use and phrasing of headings, sub-sections and effective transition.</p> <p><u>Language:</u> Arguments are mostly logical and coherent; writing is very clear, concise and easy to follow overall; mostly appropriate use of phrases and grammatical structures; follows the correct font and line spacing requirements.</p> <p><u>Mechanics</u> Follows citation and referencing requirements for in-text citation and reference list; original/reused visuals have a title and are clearly referenced in the text (e.g., As shown in Figure 1)</p>
C+ C C-	<p><u>Content:</u></p>

	<p>Demonstrate evidence of a reasonable grasp of persuasion concepts and theories; focal phenomena addressed; arguments and scales for measuring concepts (variables) provided with mistakes and based on insufficient research; sources/literature not sufficiently integrated or synthesized; strengths and weakness of the proposed theory not fully discussed.</p> <p><u>Organization</u> Sections of the paper are not clearly identifiable (introduction, method, expected results, discussion, conclusion); inconsistent or confusing use and phrasing of headings, sub-sections; lack of transition.</p> <p><u>Language:</u> Arguments lacks logical linkage; consistent errors in drafting; writing is mostly unclear or hard to follow; Lack of appropriate use of phrases and grammatical structures; fail to follow the correct font and line spacing requirements.</p> <p><u>Mechanics</u> Follows citation and referencing requirements for in-text citation and reference list with mistakes; Titles of original/reused visuals are not consistently provided or clearly referenced in the text (e.g., As shown in Figure 1)</p>
D+ D	<p><u>Content:</u> Demonstrate evidence of being able to assemble the bare minimum of information; focal phenomena not addressed; scales provided do not measure key variables; arguments and hypothesis is based on little evidence of critical thinking or research; sources/literature not integrated or synthesized; strengths and weakness of the proposed theory not discussed.</p> <p><u>Organization</u> Sections of the paper are not identifiable (introduction, method, expected results, discussion, conclusion); fails to use proper of headings, sub-sections; lack of transition.</p> <p><u>Language:</u> Arguments are illogical or incoherent in general; writing is unclear or hard to follow; inappropriate use of phrases and grammatical structures; fail to follow the correct font and line spacing requirements.</p> <p><u>Mechanics</u> Clear errors in in-text citation, visual referencing, and reference list.</p>
F	<p><u>Content:</u> Demonstrate evidence of poor knowledge and understanding of the topic, lack of coherence and organization in drafting, and the content is largely irrelevant to the requirement of the assessment. Work fails to reach degree level.</p> <p><u>Organization and Language:</u> Significant rafting errors; writing is confusing; incorrect use of phrases and grammatical structures; fail to follow the correct font and line spacing requirements.</p> <p><u>Mechanics</u> Significant errors in in-text citation, visual referencing, and reference list.</p>

Assignment: Group Presentation

Due Date:

Points: 40 points

Instruction:

You and your teammates need to come up with a proposal for persuasive campaign. The theme of the campaign is to generate some sort of a behavioral change. The change you propose could be for one of your group member's school, company, community, or HK.

Please apply the classic persuasion theories as well as practical frameworks (e.g., Cialdini's six weapons of influence and Heath & Heath's Switch framework) you have learned in class to your campaign.

Structure:

First, introduce the background information the audience needs to know in order to understand the context of your campaign.

Second, describe the goal of your campaign – what is the purpose, rationale, motivation for conducting this campaign; who are your target audience and what is the behavioral change you would like to generate.

Third, describe what exactly you would like to do. The campaign can involve a proposal of action(s) to be conducted to your target, such as a message to be delivered to them, a poster you'd like to present, and/or other strategies you'd like to use to generate behavior change.

Fourth, explain any the theories and strategies you apply to this campaign – why do you design those actions/messages/posters?

Format:

- The presentation is 20 minutes followed by a 5-minute Q-and-A session.
- You will need a structure with proper opening (e.g., attention getter, central idea, preview), transitions, and conclusion.
- PPT slides are needed to serve as visual aid. PPTs need to be submitted prior to the class meeting for the instructor to open before presentation. Updated version may be submitted after the presentation.

Rubrics for Assessing Presentation

Group: _____

Category	Specific Items	Ratings
Organization (6 points)	Overall Coherence (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The presentation fulfills the task requirements. ■ The presentation is within the time limit. 	
	Attention-getter (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use of proper tool to build emotional bond with audience and draw connection to the central idea 	
	Theme and overview (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides the central idea and an overview which clearly introduces the structure 	
	Conclusion (2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clearly summarizes the main ideas and recap the central idea. 	
	Transitions (1) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The use of internal summery, forecast or signpost 	
Content, Organization, and Persuasiveness (22points)	Introduction of background Information (2)	
	Campaign design (8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ State the purpose, rationale/motivation for conducting the campaign; ■ Specify target audience. ■ Describe the strategies and/or messages you plan to use. 	
	Appropriate application of persuasion concepts (8): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Show correct understanding of concepts ■ Clear explanation connecting the theory/concepts to strategies 	
	Build credibility (2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Show familiarity of the material ■ Quote or cite experts. ■ Show honesty and sensitivity 	
	Logical argument and persuasive appeals (2): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Logical arguments and free of reasoning fallacies ■ Discuss the effectiveness and feasibility of the proposal 	
Delivery (8 points)	Vocal delivery (3): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dynamic and active tone and appropriate pitch ■ Enunciation ■ Vocal variety ■ Control of meaningless utterance, e.g., “Uhs”, “you know” ■ Appropriate speed and pace ■ Present with enthusiasm 	
	Build connection (3):	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Natural gestures and proper posture ■ Appropriate eye contact building connection with audience 	
	<p>Appropriate use of visual aids? (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Content logical, relevant, clear and concise ■ Original/reused images & graphics suitably selected, and explain and reinforce key points during the presentation. 	
Q-and-A (4 points)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Concise and relevant answer ■ Proper and effective Q-and-A strategies 	
Total Score (40):		