

**American University of Beirut**  
**Faculty of Arts and Sciences**  
**Department: Social & Behavioral Sciences (SBS)**  
**SBHS 332 Graduate Seminar in Persuasion theory & practice**

**1. Course Learning Outcomes**

The Seminar deals with how individuals exercise influence through communication. It examines the appropriate boundaries of persuasion research, the impact of persuasive practices, and the dynamic nature of persuasion inquiry. The Seminar will carry out an interdisciplinary examination of research in a wide range of areas related to persuasion, covering issues of interest to mass communication students as well as psychologists and public health practitioners. Persuasion will be considered on a micro to macro continuum, moving from the cognitive processes, to broader social factors and phenomena, such as social context and larger-scale persuasive campaigns.

In keeping with the participatory philosophy of the course, the students themselves lead the seminar sessions, with the professor playing a facilitating role. For each session, a number of readings have been identified, and focusing questions are outlined to point the students in the direction of some of the main tenants of the readings.

The class is divided into groups of two students each, depending on the enrolment, and these teams lead the discussion for that week by providing an overview of the set readings, and then by addressing the focusing questions, as well as other issues that are of particular interest to them. The identification and explication of empirical examples is greatly encouraged in the presentations. At the end of each presentation the professor gives a summation, filling in any gaps that were left out of students presentations.

**2. Resources Available to Students**

Each seminar session includes a number of required readings that are assigned to individual students. The seminar also includes the following projects: 1- reading reports (4-8 reports for each student, depending on the size of the class); 2- one journal commentary due on April 1, and 3- a short term paper, due on April 20 (not exceeding 20 pages). There is no final exam.

***Main Readings:***

**Allen, M. & Preiss, R. W.** (Eds.), 2000, Persuasion: Advances Through Meta Analysis, Hampton Press

**Berger, C.R., & Chafee, S. H.** (Eds.). 1987, The Handbook of Communication Science, Sage Publications

**Dillard, J. P. & Pfau, M.** (Eds.), 2002, The Persuasion Handbook, Sage Publications

**Mutz, D.C., Sniderman, P.M. & Brody, R.A.** (Eds.) 1996, Political persuasion and attitude change, University of Michigan Press.

**Pfau, M. & Parrott, R.** (Eds.) 1993, Persuasive Campaigns, Allyn & Bacon.

### **3. Grading Criteria**

Grades will be based on the professor's evaluation of: 1. Class attendance and participation, 2. Reading reports and class discussions, 3. Journal commentary and 4. Term paper. The professor may give different weights to the different performances depending on his evaluation of the development in the student's learning experience in the seminar.

### **4. Course Policy**

#### **DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS**

- I. **Journal Commentary (JC):** The Journal Commentary consists of two parts. The abstract and a commentary.
- A. **THE ABSTRACT:** The abstract provides the class in written text, with a summary of a major, relatively recent, article from a scholarly journal.
- B. **THE COMMENTARY:** This is primarily a critique and an appraisal of the ideas offered in the article. The student should provide his personal evaluation of and reaction to the material presented. Several or all of the points made in the original article are ordinarily appraised, directly and specifically.

II. **Term Paper:** A "term paper" is an "analysis" of a subject related to the topics discussed in the seminar that is presented by a student in class. The term paper includes factual material about the topic, and also opinion, both of the student and of other persons. The purpose is to provide members of the seminar with a stimulating, informative, thoughtful, helpful presentation of a topic, usually in such a fashion as to throw added light on the operation of basic principles in the area. After each paper is presented to the class, two or more students will be called on as discussants. They are asked to react to, to appraise, and to evaluate the specific points made; they are not concerned with appraising the quality of the presentation itself, or the method used.

III. **Reading Report:** A "reading report" is an oral presentation to the class of a concise summary containing all the major points of a reading assigned specifically for this purpose in the Unit assignments below. The purpose of the "reading report" is to give the class the benefit of the essence, the important content, of the material. In a sense the "reading report" is a brief lecture over this material.

**Examinations:** There will be no examination in the course other than possibly the brief examinations over the readings.

### **5. Timetable for Persuasion Seminar Sessions**

<b><i>DATE</i></b>	<b><i>TOPIC</i></b>
Week 1	<b>Basic Issues</b>
Week 2-5	<b>Theories of Persuasion (I-IV)</b>
Week 6	<b>Affect and Persuasion</b>
Week 7	<b>Message Features</b>
Week 8	<b>Contexts</b>

Week 9	<b>Persuasion Campaigns (term papers due)</b>
Week 10-11	<b>Media (I-II)</b>
Week 12-14	<b>Presentation and Discussion of Students' Papers</b>

### **SEMINAR ONE: Basic Issues**

#### **Readings:**

Gerald Miller, **On Being Persuaded: Some Basic Distinctions**

Gerald Kosicki, **The Media Priming Effect: News Media and Considerations Affecting Political Judgments**

#### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *What it means to be persuaded? What is the difference between attitude extremity and attitude intensity?*
2. *What is the distinction between: a. response shaping, b. response reinforcement and c. response changing?*
3. *How media act to prime various concepts that become the basis for attitude formation and change?*
4. *How do various characterizations of an event activate particular concepts that shape persuasive discussion on that topic?*

### **SEMINAR TWO: Theories of Persuasion (I)**

#### **Readings:**

Eddie Harmon-Jones, **A Cognitive Dissonance Theory Perspective on Persuasion**

Michael Burgoon, Vickie Pauls Denning, and Laura Roberts, **Language Expectancy Theory**

#### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *Within the Lebanese context, how does the need for effective behavior motivate the reduction of dissonance?*
2. *How does the positive excess of expectations within the Lebanese context, lead to positive overestimation by the recipients?*

### **SEMINAR THREE : Theories of Persuasion (II)**

#### **Readings:**

Sharon Shavitt and Michelle Nelson, **The Role of Attitude Functions in Persuasion and Social Judgment**

Steve Booth-Butterfield and Jennifer Welbourne, **The Elaboration Likelihood Model**

#### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *What are the implications of contemporary functional theory for persuasive outcomes, message processing, and person perception?*
2. *How does the Elaborated Likelihood Model (ELM) explain persuasion?*

#### **SEMINAR FOUR: Theories of Persuasion (III)**

##### **Readings:**

Michael Slater, **Involvement as Goal-Directed Strategic Processing: Extending the Elaboration Likelihood Model**

Michael Burgoon, Eusebio Avaro, Joseph Grandpre and Michael Voulodakis, **Revisiting the Theory of Psychological Reactance: Communicating Threats to Attitudinal Freedom**

##### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *What are the six distinct message processing goals in involvement?*
2. *What are the applications of Brehm's reactance theory?*

#### **SEMINAR FIVE: Theories of Persuasion (IV)**

##### **Readings:**

Erin Alison Szabo and Michael Pfau, **Nuances in Inoculation: Theory and Application**  
Jerald Hale, Brian Householder and Kathryn Greene, **The Theory of Reasoned Action**

##### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *What are the principles that underlie inoculation?*
2. *How does inoculation function in the Palestinian or Iraqi contexts?*

#### **SEMINAR SIX : Affect and Persuasion**

##### **Readings:**

Robin Nabi, **Discrete Emotions and Persuasion**

James Price Dillard and Anneloes Meijnders, **Persuasion and the Structure of Affect**

##### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *What is the role of some Lebanese discrete emotions in persuasion?*
2. *What is an effective persuasive structure of affect in the Arab world?*

#### **SEMINAR SEVEN: Message Features**

##### **Readings:**

Pradeep Sopory and James Price Dillard, **Figurative Languages and Persuasion**

Rodney Reynolds and Lynn Reynolds, **Evidence**

Judee Burgoon, Norah Dunbar and Chris Segrin, **Nonverbal Influence**

##### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *How messages might be designed to produce the greatest suatory (persuasive) impact?*
2. *How does citing support for an argument enhances the persuasive "weight" of the message?*
3. *What is the role of power/dominance displays in Lebanon?*

#### **SEMINAR EIGHT: Contexts**

### **Readings:**

Franklin Boster and Michael Cruz, **Persuading in Small Group Context**

Xinshu Zhao, **A Variable-Based Typology and Review of Advertising-Related Persuasion Research During the 1990s**

Kelton Rhoads and Robert Cialdini, **The Business of Influence: Principles that Lead to Success in Commercial Settings**

### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *Can out-group individuals persuade in-group members? And do groups persuade persons who are not members of their group?*
2. *What are some common persuasive “types” in Lebanese advertising?*
3. *What are some of the successful Lebanese commercial settings?*

## **SEMINAR NINE: Persuasion Campaigns**

### **Readings:**

Richard Perloff, **Political Campaign Persuasion and its Discontents: Perspectives from the Past and Research Prescriptions for the Future**

Roxanne Parrott, Nichole Egbert, John Anderton, and Enid Sefcovic, **Enlarging the Role of Environment as a Social Influence Construct in Health Campaigns**

Garrett O’Keefe and Robin Shepard, **Overcoming the Challenges of Environmental Public Information and Action Programs**

### **Focusing questions:**

1. *What is the role of political persuasive campaigns in the present US presidential elections?*
2. *What Lebanese environmental factors may be effective in persuasive health campaigns?*
3. *What are some of the environmental challenges to Lebanese public information programs?*

## **SEMINAR TEN: Media (I)**

### **Readings:**

William Eveland, Jr., **The Impact of News and Entertainment Media on Perception of Social Reality**

John Newhagen, **The Role of Meaning Construction in the Process of Persuasion for Viewers of Television Images**

### **Focusing Questions:**

1. *How does the consumption of news and entertainment media in Lebanon influence the perceptions of social reality?*
2. *How do Arab television images affect the construction of meaning?*
3. *What is the persuasive power of Arab television narrative?*

## **SEMINAR ELEVEN: Media (II)**

### **Readings:**

R. Lance Holbert, **The Embodied Meaning of Media Forms**

B.J. Fogg, Elissa Lee and Jonathan Marshall, **Interactive Technology and Persuasion**

**Focusing Questions:**

1. *What are the constraints that follow from the interaction between a medium and what a person can do within the constraints afforded by that medium?*
2. *Apart from style, structure or content, do the media have a pronounced impact on persuasion that occurs?*
3. *How does interactive technology simultaneously permits and prohibits the available means of persuasion?*

**SEMINAR Twelve-Fourteen: Presentation and Discussion of Students' Papers**