

SPC 3542: PERSUASION

School of Communication & Multimedia Studies Spring 2025
Three (3) Credit Hours

Instructor: Dr. Carol Bishop Mills
Office Location: Culture & Society #204
Office Hours: By Appointment (In-Person/Online)
Email: mills@fau.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Catalog Description

Introduces students to the broad range of theoretical perspectives on persuasion as it operates to structure human relationships, shape attitudes and perceptions and constitute various cultural formations.

Extended Description

This upper-level communication studies course uses a combination of rhetorical, social scientific, and critical approaches to the art of persuasion. By the end of this semester, you should be able to recognize the importance and complexity of persuasion in society; understand the various methods of and perspectives on modern persuasion; critique these methods and perspectives for their particular strengths and weaknesses; understand the persuasive strategies and tactics undergirding persuasive artifacts (like advertisements, speeches, mime, or even statues!); effectively identify, analyze, and critique these messages; and develop a sense of moral/ethical responsibility regarding how you and others might use persuasion in the service of social responsibility.

COURSE PREREQUISITES

COM 2053 with a minimum grade of "C."

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of persuasion in society (CO:1)
- Differentiate perspectives of modern persuasion (CO:2)
- Analyze methods of modern persuasion for their strengths and weaknesses (CO:3)
- Identify persuasive strategies and tactics that occur in real-world circumstances (CO:4)
- Analyze persuasive messages (CO:5)

Articulate a sense of moral and ethical responsibility regarding how you and others might use persuasion in the service of social responsibility. (CO:6)
Develop your own persuasive messaging system to achieve a desired goal (CO:7)

COURSE DELIVERY MODE

This is an online course with no in-class lectures or break-out discussion groups. Therefore, this class will run as an autonomous learning experience (no group projects, discussion posts, etc.). As such, it will require a great deal more independent learning than your typical upper-level course. If you are uncomfortable with this level of autonomy (and there is nothing wrong with that), you might consider exploring other courses.

It's a 15-week course in 6 weeks, so expect a lot of reading and a lot of writing—about three times more than your average course. All assessments require critical engagement with your texts. To succeed, you must be comfortable reading 2-3 book chapters/academic articles and/or 2-3 case studies per week and having consistent/involved assessments. I also try to diversify assessment types to accommodate different strengths/weaknesses.

TIME COMMITMENT PER CREDIT HOUR

This course has three (3) credit hours. For traditionally delivered courses, not less than one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week for fifteen (15) weeks per Fall or Spring semester, and a minimum of two (2) hours of out-of-class student work for each credit hour. Equivalent time and effort are required for Summer Semesters, which usually have a shortened timeframe. Fully Online courses, hybrid, shortened, intensive format courses, and other non-traditional modes of delivery will demonstrate equivalent time and effort.

REQUIRED TEXTS & MATERIALS

Required Texts/Materials

In this course, you will need the following texts and/or materials:

Beeson, L. (2015). *Persuasion: Theory and Applications* (1st edition). New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN: 978-0-19-973235-7

Other texts available through the Canvas system or on this syllabus as posted hyperlinks.

MINIMUM TECHNOLOGY & COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE REQUIREMENTS

Hardware

Dependable computer
Computer speakers
Headset with microphone
Webcam

Software

[Microsoft 365 Suite](#)

Reliable web browser (recommended [Chrome](#) or [Firefox](#))

Canvas mobile app: Download instructions for [iOS device](#) or [Android device](#)

[Adobe Reader](#)

[Adobe Flash Player](#)

Internet Connection

Recommended: Broadband Internet connection with a speed of 4 Mbps or higher.

To function properly, Canvas requires a high-speed Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, T1, etc.). The minimum Internet connection speed to access Canvas is a consistent 1.5 Mbps (megabits per second) or higher.

[Check your Internet speed here.](#)

COMPUTER REQUIREMENTS

Basic [Computer Specifications](#) for Canvas

Operating system: Windows 10 or macOS High Sierra (10.3) or higher.

[Specifications](#)

Peripherals

A backup option should be available to minimize the loss of work. This can be an external hard drive, a USB drive, cloud storage, or your folder on the FAU servers.

Software

Once logged in to Canvas make sure your Internet browser is compatible. Other software may be required for specific learning modules. If so, the necessary links to download and install will be provided within the applicable module.

MINIMUM TECHNICAL SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

The general and course-specific technical skills you must have to succeed in the course include but are not limited to:

Accessing Internet.

Using Canvas (including taking tests, attaching documents, etc.).

Using email with attachments.

Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats such as Microsoft Office Tools.

Copying and pasting functions.

Downloading and installing software.

Using presentation, graphics, and other programs.

Posting and commenting in an online discussion.

Searching the FAU library and websites.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

In the online environment, technical issues are always possible (e.g., lost connection, hardware or software failure). Many of these can be resolved relatively quickly, but if you wait until the last minute before due dates, the chances of these glitches affecting your success are greatly increased. Please plan appropriately. If a problem occurs, it is essential you take immediate action to document the issue so your instructor can verify and take appropriate action to resolve the problem. Most issues in Canvas can be resolved by clicking on the "Help" tab located on the menu bar.

When a problem occurs, click "Help" to:

Report a Problem

Live Chat with Canvas Support

Search Canvas Guides

Additional Technical Support

Contact the eLearning Success Advisor for assistance: (561) 297-3590

If you can, make a Print Screen of the monitor when the problem occurs. Save the Print Screen as a .jpg file. If you are unfamiliar with creating a Print Screen file, see [Print Screen instructions](#). Complete a [Help Desk ticket](#). Make sure you complete the form entirely and give a full description of your problem so the Help Desk staff will have the pertinent information in order to assist you properly. This includes:

Select "Canvas (Student)" for the Ticket Type.

Input the Course ID.

In the Summary/Additional Details section, include your operating system, Internet browser, and Internet service provider (ISP).

Attach the Print Screen file, if available.

Send a message within Canvas to your instructor to notify him/her of the problem. Include all pertinent information of the incident (2b-d above).

If you do not have access to Canvas, send an email to your instructor with all pertinent information of the incident (2b-d above).

If you do not have access to a computer, call your instructor with all pertinent information of the incident. If he/she is not available, make sure you leave a detailed message.

If you do not hear back from the Help Desk or your instructor within a timely manner (48 hours), it is your responsibility to follow up with the appropriate person until you obtain a resolution.

COURSE ASSESSMENTS, ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING POLICY

GRADING CRITERIA

Syllabus & Course Agreement Quiz (25 points)

The easiest 25 points you'll ever earn. Go on Canvas and take a quiz regarding the content of this syllabus. You can take it as many times as you want! Note that this quiz doubles as a course contract between you and me, wherein we both agree to abide by the terms of the syllabus to create a fair exchange of academic services. Taking this quiz means that, should you come to me about an assignment due date or other specific issue that might have been found on the syllabus had you looked at it previously, I will not comply with a request for special treatment.

Online Reading Quizzes (50 x 5 = 250 points)

These are untimed, multiple choice assessments covering specific chapters of your textbook, of academic articles, of assigned youtube videos, etc. They emphasize key course vocabulary and new concepts. They are open-book, but the nature of the questions will make passing the quiz difficult without already having taken thorough notes on the course content! You may only take the quiz one time.

Reading Responses: (100 x 4 = 400 points)

These are short writing activities that allow you to respond to the assigned texts in your own personal style. You will respond to one “unit’s” worth of texts (so if you do a reading response for Week 1, you’ll pick all the readings for the unit on, say, “rhetorical theory”). They must be approximately 300-400 words (one single-spaced page or two double-spaced pages). The rubric is based on your ability to accomplish 4 tasks: First, summarize the reading(s) under review; next relate the reading(s) to each other to figure out how and why they “fit together”; then reflect upon the readings—what do you like? Dislike? Agree with? Disagree with? What intrigued you? What upset you?; finally apply the readings to a concrete case study—so if the readings included “political media,” you might apply the texts to a politician’s campaign. Devote equal time to all four categories—a response that is 75% summary will be awarded a failing grade. USING AI for this will ensure you will NOT do well. The goal is to integrate and apply the readings. AI cannot do that well and you will end up with a generic response that lacks depth, insight, and specificity.

Midterm Part I: “Fantastical Speech” FlipGrid Video Activity (125 points)

To compose a short speech in which you, as a fictional character, attempt to convince your audience of the salience of a current issue of democratic importance in your world and take some kind of socio-political action (even if it’s just changing their minds or realizing an issue is important) that would substantially alter the canonized plotline of your world.

Midterm Part II: Metacognitive Analysis (200 points)

You will engage deeply with course concepts by composing a metacognitive analysis in which you reflect on the writing (and acting) choices you made in your speech. You will explain what you did and defend why you did it within the theoretical context of mediated political communication.

The instructor will calculate your grade based on the following weighted distribution:

Assessment	Total Points
Syllabus & Course Agreement Quiz	25
Five (5) Online Reading Quizzes @ 50 Points each	250
Four (4) Reading Responses @ 100 points each	400
Midterm Part I: "Fantastical Speech" FlipGrid Video Activity	100
Midterm Part II: Metacognitive Analysis	100
Final Exam	200
TOTAL:	1075

GRADE SCALE

Grade	Percentage (%)
A	93 – 100%
A-	90 – 92%
B+	87 – 89%
B	83 – 86%
B-	80 – 82%
C+	77 – 79%
C	73 – 76%
C-	70 – 72%
D+	67 – 69%
D	63 – 66%
D-	60 – 62%
F	0 – 59%

LATE ASSIGNMENTS POLICY

Standard weekly assignments (quizzes and/or reading responses) and your larger assessments are due by Fridays at 11:59pm via the online Canvas system.

Late work will result in a docked grade of 10% for every 24 hours it is late, up to a maximum of 50% credit. This does not apply to quizzes, which cannot be made up except in exceptional (and documented) circumstances. FORGED medical excuses, etc. will result in an immediate class failure and a charge of academic misconduct.

No late work will be evaluated for full credit unless you clear this with me beforehand. (This is something that I will only clear for very good reasons such as documented medical emergencies—in other words, for the same criteria as FAU's excused absences.) Submit all assignments electronically via Canvas.

Please adhere to a style format of your choosing (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.). I don't care which style you pick, but you need to do it correctly. Failure to do so will result in a loss of points. My makeup work policy is that students can request an extension for any reason and without penalty if I receive at least 24 hours' notice. Otherwise I need documentation of an emergency or a university-sanctioned absence to allow makeup work.

INCOMPLETE GRADE POLICY

The University policy states that a student who is passing a course but has not completed all work due to exceptional circumstances, may, with consent of the instructor, temporarily receive a grade of incomplete ("I"). The assignment of the "I" grade is at the discretion of the instructor but is allowed only if the student is passing the course.

COURSE CALENDAR

Pre-Semester Introduction

Read: Beeson, Ch.1

Complete: Syllabus Quiz

Week 1: Theoretical Frameworks in Persuasion

Complete: Reading Quiz #1

Write: Reading Response #1

Unit 1: The Rhetorical Perspective

Read: Beeson, Ch. 2

Watch: 5 Canons of Rhetoric <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2G6kEI-9rw8>

Watch: Use Rhetoric to Get What You Want

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3klMM9BkV5o&t=1s>

Unit 2: The Social Scientific Perspective

Read: Beeson, Ch. 3

Watch: Science of Persuasion □ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFdCzN7RYbw>

Watch: Priming Our Brain □ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySwnUqzvx78>

Week 2: Persuasion & the Art of Language

Complete: Reading Quiz #2

Write: Reading Response #2

Unit 1: Language & Symbolic Action

Read: Beeson, Ch. 4

Watch: George Lakoff on Message □ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Lrc0R_k441I

Unit 2: Logical Reasoning & Argumentation

Read: Beeson, Ch. 5

Watch: How to Argue □ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKEhdsnKKHs>

Watch: How to Win an Argument □ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XF0AxT_pyw

Week 3: Persuasion & “Civil” Society

Complete: Reading Quiz #3

Submit Midterm Part I: “Fantastical Speech” FlipGrid Video Activity

Submit Midterm Part II: Metacognitive Analysis

Unit 1: Persuasion & Politics

Read: Beeson, Ch. 6

Watch: Wemple (Canvas)

Watch: Crash Course in Media & Politics □

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6F0g4N415uw>

Unit 2: Persuasion & Law

Read: Beeson, Ch. 7

Read: Lean (Canvas)

Week 4: Persuasion, Faith & Facts

Complete: Quiz #4

Write: Reading Response #3

Unit 1: Persuasion & Religion

Read: Beeson, Ch. 8
Read: Rust (Canvas)

Unit 2: Persuasion & Science

Read: Ceccarelli (Canvas)
Read: Theriault (Canvas)
Watch: The Science of Anti-Vaccination
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rzxr9FeZf1g>

Week 5: Persuasion for Economic & Social Capital

Take: Reading Quiz #5
Write: Reading Response #4

Unit 1: Persuasion and Profiteering

Read: Beeson, Ch. 10
Read: Atkinson (Canvas)
Watch: Crash Course Media Literacy <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VXhLmkrN0-> I

Unit 2: Persuasion & Popular Culture

Read: Trujillo: Masculinity on the Mound (Canvas)
Read: Brinkman <https://blogs.longwood.edu/brinkmancm/2017/04/13/celebrities-in-persuasive-advertising/>
Watch: Adam Ruins Everything: Video Games & Violence
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6P2fw7ZftF8> Week 6: Wrapping Up
Take: Cumulative Final Exam (Canvas)

COURSE POLICIES

ATTENDANCE

There is no way for me to “prove” if you are “attending” an online class other than your assignment submissions. Therefore, you will not be given any credit for attendance. However, Absences mandated by the university (participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities, and academic accommodations, all of which

must be documented) are considered “excused” absences for which assignment extensions can be granted. Please communicate with me accordingly if you anticipate such absences.

CLASSROOM CLIMATE

We’re not in a classroom, per se, but you should treat the course as though you were. During the course of the semester, we may read and view materials, entertain topics, and/or discuss issues that challenge the ways we think about persuasion’s influence on U.S. American sociocultural, economic, and political practices. Spirited writing (and even outright disagreements) are encouraged. However, disrespect of the instructor or your peers will not be tolerated. It is a sign of masterful persuasive tactics to be able to disagree in a manner that does not result in personal alienation / antagonization in predesigned discussion spaces such as the classroom. Egregious disrespect including, but not limited to, racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, classism, etc. will not be tolerated.

CODE OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY STATEMENT

Students at Florida Atlantic University should endeavor to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is a serious breach of these ethical standards because it interferes with the University mission to provide a high-quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive to the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see [University Regulation 4.001](#).

PLAGIARISM

[Plagiarism](#) is unacceptable in the University community. Academic work must be an original work of your own thought, research, or self-expression. When students borrow ideas, wording, or organization from another source, they must acknowledge that fact in an appropriate manner. Plagiarism is the deliberate use and appropriation of another’s work without identifying the source and trying to pass off such work as one’s own. Any student who fails to give full credit for ideas or materials taken from another has plagiarized. This includes all discussion board posts, journal entries, wikis, and other written and oral presentation assignments. If in doubt, cite your source.

ONLINE ATTENDANCE POLICY

Since the course is online, you should access the course at least three times per week to ensure you do not miss pertinent postings, messages, or announcements. It is imperative that you meet course deadlines and stay active in discussion boards, group projects, etc. If you are

experiencing major illness, absences due to University duties, or other large-scale issues, contact the instructor immediately to formulate a resolution.

NETIQUETTE

Due to the casual communication common in the online environment, students are sometimes tempted to relax their grammar, spelling, and/or professionalism. Please remember that you are adult students and professionals—your communication should be appropriate. For more in-depth information, please see the [FAU statement on netiquette](#).

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE/DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY STATEMENT

Disruptive behavior is defined in the FAU Student Code of Conduct as “... activities which interfere with the educational mission within classroom.” Students who disrupt the educational experiences of other students and/or the instructor’s course objectives in a face-to-face or online course are subject to disciplinary action. Such behavior impedes students’ ability to learn or an instructor’s ability to teach. Disruptive behavior may include but is not limited to non-devices (including cellular telephones); cursing or shouting at others in such a way as to be disruptive; or, other violations of an instructor’s expectations for classroom conduct.

For more information, please see the [FAU Office of Student Conduct](#).

COMMUNICATION POLICY

EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENTS

Announcements

You are responsible for reading all announcements posted by the instructor. Check the course announcements each time you log in.

Email/Video Conferencing

You are responsible for reading all your course email and responding in a timely manner.

Course-Related Questions

Post course-related questions to the FAQ discussion board. This allows other participants with the same question to benefit from the responses. Also, make sure you review this forum prior to posting a question. Someone may have already asked and answered the question in previous

posts.

INSTRUCTOR'S PLAN FOR CLASSROOM RESPONSE TIME & FEEDBACK

Contacting the Instructor

Contacting the Instructor outside of class is most effectively via email at mullers@fau.edu or through the Canvas email system. If you are having any troubles or concerns with class, please don't hesitate to speak with me. I am not a monster, I promise. We can schedule office hours that occur in person, via WebEx, or via email.

Please Note: Keep in mind that this is an upper-level college class. As such, I do expect a certain level of formality when exchanging emails. Please keep your message titles specific ("Regarding Class on 10/21" as opposed to "hey"). Use proper grammar and avoid text message lingo ("I don't know" versus "idk"). Be sure to include your full name in the email. Otherwise, I may ask you to send the email again before delivering a response to your question.

Email/Video Conferencing Policy

Except for weekends and holidays, the instructor will typically respond to email (Canvas inbox or FAU email) within 48 hours. You should ask course-related questions in the FAQ discussion board. If you have questions of a personal nature, you should email the instructor.

Assignment Feedback Policy

The instructor will provide written feedback on Reading Response assignments as well as the Midterm Part I: "Fantastical Speech" and Midterm Part II: Metacognitive Analysis exams within one week of the submission date. Some assignments may require a longer review period, which the instructor will communicate to you. Reading Quizzes are graded automatically and score feedback is instant.

Course-Related Questions Policy

Except weekends and holidays, the instructor will generally answer questions within 48 hours.

Electronic Communication Policy

In addition to the University's policy, please consider the following:

Privacy, confidentiality, and security in all electronic communications.

All electronic communication resources must be used for the course and in alignment with to the University mission.

Prohibited use of false identity, false identity pseudonyms, or anonymous (sender's name or electronic identification is hidden).

Access without consent.
Disruption of services including introducing computer contaminants (viruses).
Harassment of any kind.

Please see the Office of Information Technology's policies on [Cyber Security Awareness](#).

SUPPORT SERVICES & ONLINE RESOURCES

[Center for eLearning and Student Success](#)
[Counseling and Psychological Service \(CAPS\)](#)
[FAU Libraries](#)
[Freshmen Academic Advising Services](#)
[Math Learning Center](#)
[Office of Information Technology Helpdesk](#)
[Office of International Programs and Study Abroad](#)
[Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry](#)
[Student Accessibility Services](#)
[University Center for Excellence in Writing](#)

CAPS STATEMENT

Life as a university student can be challenging mentally, emotionally, and physically. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services to help improve and maintain well-being. For CAPS services, students need to be currently enrolled, have paid the health fee, be physically located in Florida when services are provided, have phone or videoconferencing capabilities, and have access to a safe/private location for sessions. For those outside of Florida, CAPS will assist students in getting connected to services/providers in your area for ongoing support. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/> or call 561-297-3540.

FACULTY RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Florida Atlantic University respects the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn. Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede their exercise.

To ensure these rights, faculty members have the prerogative to:

Establish and implement academic standards.
Establish and enforce reasonable behavior standards in each class.

Recommend disciplinary action for students whose behavior may be judged as disruptive under the Student Code of Conduct.

SELECTED UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE POLICIES

ACCESSIBILITY POLICY STATEMENT

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), students who require special accommodations to properly execute coursework due to a disability, must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) located in the Boca Raton, Davie, and Jupiter campuses and follow all SAS procedures. For additional information, please consult [Student Accessibility Services](#).

Contact

Boca Raton: (561) 297-3880
Fax: (561) 297-2184, TTY: 711

Davie: (954) 236-1222
Fax: (954) 236-1123, TTY: 711

Jupiter: (561) 799-8721
Fax: (561) 799-8721, TTY: 711

GRADE APPEAL PROCESS

You may request a review of the final course grade when you believe that one of the following conditions apply:

There was a computational or recording error in the grading.
The grading process used non-academic criteria.
There was a gross violation of the instructor's own grading system.

[Chapter 4 of the University Regulations](#) contains information on the grade appeals process.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with rules of the Florida Board of Education and Florida law, students have the right to reasonable accommodations from the University in order to observe religious practices and beliefs regarding admissions, registration, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and work assignments. For further information, please see [Academic Policies and Regulations](#).

UNIVERSITY APPROVED ABSENCE POLICY STATEMENT

In accordance with rules of the Florida Atlantic University, students have the right to reasonable accommodations to participate in University approved activities, including athletic or scholastics teams, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is your responsibility to notify the instructor at least one week prior to missing any course assignment.

UNIVERSITY APPROVED ATTENDANCE POLICY STATEMENT

Students are expected to attend all of their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of non-attendance. Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

DROPS/WITHDRAWALS

You are responsible for completing the process of dropping or withdrawing from a course. Please click on the following link for more information on dropping and/or withdrawing from a course. Please consult the [FAU Registrar Office](#) for more information.

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The instructor reserves the right to adjust this syllabus as necessary.