

**COM 330: Persuasion**  
**TR, 8:00 am – 9:15 am in C 202**  
Department of Communication & Theatre  
Point Loma Nazarene University

**Professor:** Dr. Lisa Raser  
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**Office Hours:** M/W/F: 10:30-11:30 am; M: 1:00-2:30 pm and by appointment.

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## PLNU MISSION

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service becomes an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we aspire to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

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## REQUIRED MATERIALS & RESOURCES

Gass, R.H. and Seiter, J.S. *Persuasion: Social Influence and Compliance Gaining*. (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.).  
New York, NY: Routledge.

\*Please read and save this syllabus. If you remain in the course after the first day of class, then you are stipulating that you will abide by the university and course policies described within this syllabus.

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## COURSE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OUTCOMES

In this course, we will be learning *how* and *why* persuasion functions. We will also learn about some of the techniques of propaganda and how propaganda differs from persuasion. Through examples, analysis, and application, our goals will be to: (1) become more effective persuaders and (2) to learn how to resist unethical influence attempts of others.

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- explain and apply persuasion theories, processes, and practices
- identify the differences between persuasion and propaganda
- differentiate between different propaganda techniques and interpret them through an original poster project
- discuss the ethical implications of persuasion and propaganda
- distinguish between persuasion and compliance gaining and identify compliance-gaining strategies
- analyze an advertisement and deconstruct “how it works” persuasively

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## COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

**Support:** I am committed to helping every student attain their best possible education.

I AM HERE TO HELP! Please do not hesitate to ask questions, or ask for help, in or out of class. I will also be available if you would like me to review your work and give you feedback before it is turned in or presented. If you have any special needs that it would be helpful for me to be aware of, please do let me know.

**Attendance:** As members of a learning community, your presence is appreciated, and your absence is noticed. The class sessions are set up to help people learn from each other (through discussions, activities, etc.) and you are expected to attend each class session. Everyone has useful and insightful information to offer to the class. Participation is the core of this work, and to help keep track of that, I take attendance.

You are allowed two (2) excused or unexcused absences in the course of the semester without penalty. The only absences excused after that will be university approved absences (see section below). It is your choice how you use these absences and it is encouraged that you use them wisely. Please note that these 2 absences DO include instances of illness and family obligations. Each absence over two will result in a 15-point deduction to your overall grade.

As noted in the University catalog: If you are absent from more than 10 percent of class meetings (3 classes), I have the option of filing a written report which may result in de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent (6 classes), you may be de-enrolled without notice. If the date of de-enrollment is past the last date to withdraw from a class, you will be assigned a grade of W or WF consistent with university policy in the grading section of the catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**University Approved Absences:** Absences for certain events and obligations recognized by the University (i.e.: participation in sports, forensics, music tours, etc.) may be counted as “excused.” Please notify me at least one week prior to such absences with documentation and contact information from the sponsoring program/department. You are responsible for making up all work missed due to absences in a timely manner, to be worked out ahead of time with me.

**Late to Class/Leaving Early:** It is an expectation of this class community that we begin our class time *together*, and complete our class time *together* each day. Since arriving late to class is distracting to your classmates (and to your professor), you are expected to arrive on time. Three late arrivals will count as one absence. Truly perfect attendance (with no tardies or absences of any kind—you were literally present for all of every class meeting) will earn you 10 points of extra credit at the end of the semester (the only extra credit offered in this course).

Being absent for more than 20 minutes during any part of a class period, whether at the beginning, middle, or end, will constitute an absence. Similarly, it is expected that you remain actively engaged in the classroom activities until the entire class has been dismissed for the day. Failure to do so will result in a deduction of your participation points for the course. If you absolutely must leave early one day for an important/legitimate/emergency reason, please approve it with me at the class period prior or via email. (Please arrange any meetings with your major adviser so that they do not conflict with your class schedule.) If you leave class early without timely notification/approval, it will negatively affect your course participation grade. Please talk to me early in the semester if you have any questions or concerns about this policy.

**Late Work/Make-Up Work:** All work is expected on the planned “due dates” - at the beginning of the class period when they are due. In general, no late or makeup written assignments/presentations will be allowed. In the event of a personal emergency with written documentation and at my discretion, make-up work *may* be accepted for half credit. If you are absent on the day of a test or a presentation, I will only consider a make-up opportunity if you have communicated with me in advance of your absence and you have written documentation of a personal emergency. Depending upon the circumstance, a make-up opportunity may not receive full credit.

**Incomplete:** Incompletes will only be granted under extreme circumstances, given reasonable justification.

**Electronic Devices:** The use of cell phones and laptops/tablets during class is prohibited unless I ask for them to be used as a specific part of a class activity. Please join me in turning off or silencing all cell phones, laptops, and similar electronic devices and keeping them out of sight for the duration of class. This policy

was influenced by two important pieces of research: 1. Faria Sana, Tina Weston, and Nicholas J. Cepeda, "Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers," *Computers and Education* (March 2013): "We found that participants who multitasked on a laptop during a lecture scored lower on a test compared to those who did not multitask, and participants who were in direct view of a multitasking peer scored lower on a test compared to those who were not. The results demonstrate that multitasking on a laptop poses a significant distraction to both users and fellow students and can be detrimental to comprehension of lecture content." 2. Pam A. Mueller and Daniel M. Oppenheimer, "The Pen Is Mightier Than the Keyboard: Advantages of Longhand Over Laptop Note Taking" (April 2014). In this study, the authors found that students who hand wrote their notes during lectures remembered more material than students who used laptops for notetaking because they could not write everything down verbatim. The extra processing required by the hand writers to select important over extraneous information was beneficial for their retention of the material they were learning.

**Email:** I will frequently use email to communicate with you and I do my best to respond to your emails as promptly as possible. I will respond to emails Monday-Friday from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm. If you send me an email over the weekend or holiday, I will respond on the following school day.

**Written Work:** Please type, double-space and staple all written work unless instructed otherwise. It is my expectation that all writing will be clear, coherent, and free of grammatical/spelling errors. Please proof all written work – your grade will reflect both the substance and the style of your writing. When working on the computer, try to plan for the "unexpected" but predictable problems: plan extra time for library printing lines and back up files as you go.

**Student Responsibility:**

It is the student's responsibility to maintain his/her class schedule. Should the need arise to drop this course (personal emergencies, poor performance, etc.), the student has the responsibility to follow through (provided the drop date meets the stated calendar deadline established by the university), not the instructor. Simply ceasing to attend this course or failing to follow through to arrange for a change of registration (drop/add) may easily result in a grade of F on the official transcript.

**Final Exam Policy:**

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the [Class Schedules](#) site. Final exams will not be given early before our assigned date/time. Please arrange any activities or transportation for the break around this finals schedule so that you can be present to take the test at the assigned time.

**Academic Dishonesty:**

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. As stated in the university catalog, "Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. Such acts include plagiarism, copying of class assignments, and copying or other fraudulent behavior on examinations. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for a) that particular assignment or examination, and/or b) the course." See [Academic Policies](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**Academic Accommodations:**

While all students are expected to meet the minimum academic standards for completion of this course as established by the instructor, students with disabilities may require academic accommodations. At Point Loma Nazarene University, students requesting academic accommodations must file documentation with the Disability Resource Center (DRC), located in the Bond Academic Center. Once the student files documentation, the Disability Resource Center will contact the student's instructors and provide written recommendations for reasonable and appropriate accommodations to meet the individual learning needs of the student. This policy assists the University in its commitment to full compliance with Section 504 of the

Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act of 1990, and ADA Amendments Act of 2008, all of which prohibit discrimination against students with disabilities and guarantees all qualified students equal access to and benefits of PLNU programs and activities.

**Ferpa Policy:**

In compliance with federal law, neither PLNU student ID nor social security number will be used in publicly posted grades or returned sets of assignments without student written permission. This class will meet the federal requirements by (each faculty member choose one strategy to use: distributing all grades and papers individually; requesting and filing written student permission; or assigning each student a unique class ID number not identifiable on the alphabetic roster.). Also in compliance with FERPA, you will be the only person given information about your progress in this class unless you have designated others to receive it in the "Information Release" section of the student portal. See [Policy Statements](#) in the undergrad student catalog.

**PLNU Copyright Policy:**

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

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## CLASS ASSIGNMENTS & COURSE SCHEDULE

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**Exams:** There are three exams in this course. Exams will include material from the book and in-class discussion/activities. You may bring one 3x5 notecard (front and back, handwritten – not typed) to each exam.

**Reading Quizzes:** There will occasionally be short unannounced quizzes (5-10 points each) on the assigned reading. Reading quizzes will be given at the beginning of class. If you arrive late to class, you will not be given additional time to take the quiz. Reading Quizzes cannot be made up. The reading quiz with the lowest score will be dropped at the end of the semester.

**Original Propaganda Poster:** You will design an original propaganda poster using a selection from the ten propaganda techniques that we will learn about in class. You will need to acquire a poster board for this assignment. Prompts will be given in class and you will have some choice in selecting the overall theme of your poster. On the day that your poster is due, we will hang them around the classroom and complete a "gallery tour," identifying the different propaganda techniques that we have studied.

**Ad Analysis Paper & Presentation:** You will select and analyze an advertisement (either a static image such as a billboard, magazine page, digital ad or a video) in order to uncover "how it works" persuasively. In a written paper, you will identify and evaluate the advertisement's use of persuasive strategies and explain what the advertisement is attempting to accomplish. Your textbook will be a very important resource to you in the successful completion of this project, so it is imperative that you keep up with your reading assignments. At the end of the semester, you will present the results of your analysis to the class in a formal presentation.

**In-Class (or take home) Assignments and Participation:** At times you will be given short assignments or exercises in class (or to take home) that are worth points toward your final grade. These assignments may include written responses/reflections, home learning, group work, etc. The point value for these assignments may vary, but will be clearly designated on the assignment.

The remaining portion of this grade will be designated for your class participation and will reflect your involvement in the course, including (but not limited to): your regular and on-time class attendance, how well/completely you read for the day and incorporate text concepts into the discussion/activities, how "present" you are in class, how readily you volunteer for in-class activities, and how well you generally

project respectful involvement such as supportive listening, nonverbal feedback, and thoughtful verbal contributions.

## ASSESSMENT & GRADING

Grade Scale (% to Letter): Final grades will be calculated as follows and will not be rounded.

93-100	A	73-76.9%	C
90-92.9%	A-	70-72.9%	C-
87-89.9%	B+	67-69.9%	D+
83-86.9%	B	63-66.9%	D
80-82.9%	B-	60-62.9%	D-
77-79.9%	C+	0-59	F

### Point Distribution

COURSE REQUIREMENTS	Number of Points AVAILABLE	Number of Points I EARNED
Test # 1	75	
Test # 2	75	
Test # 3	100	
Original Propaganda Poster	75	
Ad Analysis Paper & Presentation	125	
Additional Assignments, Reading Quizzes & Participation	100	
<b>TOTAL</b> <b>- Absence penalties (15 pts. per absence after 2 absences)</b>	<b>550</b> <b>(e.g., 3 absences = -15)</b>	

### Tentative Course Schedule

- Subject to change with fair notice.
- Please complete reading prior to arriving at class on the assigned due date.

WK	Date	Topic	Reading/Assignments Due
1	R 8/31	Welcome/Course Introduction	
2	T 9/5	Why Study Persuasion?	Ch. 1 (Hint: we <i>will</i> have a short quiz on Ch.1)
	R 9/7	Why Study Persuasion? Prop Tech # 1 & 2: Assertion and Bandwagon	
3	T 9/12	What Constitutes Persuasion?	Ch. 2
	R 9/14	Attitudes and Consistency	Ch. 3
4	T 9/19	Attitudes and Consistency	Ch. 3 Attitude Assessment Due
	R 9/21	Credibility Prop Tech # 3: Cardstacking <i>Assign: Propaganda Posters</i>	Ch. 4
5	T 9/26	Communicator Characteristics and Persuadability Prop Tech # 4 & 5: Glittering Generalities and False Dilemma	Ch. 5
	R 9/28	Conformity and Influence in Groups	Ch. 6

		Prop Tech # 6: The Lesser of Two Evils	
6	T 10/3	<b>Test # 1</b> (bring a note card)	<b>Test # 1 (Ch. 1-5) &amp; Prop Techs # 1-5</b>
	R 10/5	Language and Persuasion	Ch. 7
7	T 10/10	Nonverbal Influence <i>Assign: Ad Analysis Project</i>	Ch. 8
	R 10/12	Nonverbal Influence Prop Tech # 7: Pinpointing the Enemy	Nonverbal Assignment Due
8	T 10/17	Structuring and Ordering Persuasive Messages Prop Tech # 8: Plain Folk	Ch. 9 Listen to: Hidden Brain Podcast, Episode 55: Snooki and the Handbag Listening Reflection Due
	R 10/19	Sequential Persuasion Prop Tech # 9: Testimonial	Ch. 10
9	T 10/24	Visual Persuasion Prop Tech #10: Transfer	Ch. 14
	R 10/26	Visual Persuasion	
10	T 10/31	<b>Test # 2</b> (bring a note card)	<b>Test # 2 (Ch. 6-10) &amp; Prop Techs # 6-8</b>
	R 11/2	Esoteric Forms of Persuasion	Ch. 15
11	T 11/7	Share Propaganda Posters in class	<b>Propaganda Poster Due</b>
	R 11/9	Motivational Appeals	Ch. 13
12	T 11/14	Compliance Gaining	Ch. 11
	R 11/16	Deception	Ch. 12
13	T 11/21	The Ethics of Persuasion	Ch. 16
	R 11/23	<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>	No Class
14	T 11/28	<b>Ad Analysis Presentations</b>	
	R 11/30	<b>Ad Analysis Presentations</b>	
15	T 12/5	<b>Ad Analysis Presentations</b>	<b>Ad Analysis Paper Due</b>
	R 12/7	<b>Ad Analysis Presentations</b>	
16	Finals Week	<b>Test # 3</b> (bring a note card) Thursday, Dec 14 <sup>th</sup> 7:30 am – 10:00 am	<b>Test # 3 (Ch. 11-16) &amp; Prop Techs # 9-10</b>  Please note: Test # 3 will not be given early before our assigned date/time. Please arrange any activities or transportation for the break around this finals schedule so that you can be present to take the test at the assigned time.