

Instructor: Dr. Steve Hunt
Office: Fell 427
Office Phone: 438-7279
Office Hours: TR 1:00 p.m.-2:00 p.m., & by appointment when necessary
E-mail: skhunt2@ilstu.edu
Section: 01 (2:00 p.m.-3:15 p.m./TR/Fell 176)

TEXT:

Hunt, S. K., & Meyer, K. R. (2022). *Engaged persuasion in a post-truth world*. Cognella.

Additional readings will be assigned throughout the semester. You also need to maintain a working email account that you can check before class each day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The primary goal of this course is to provide students with a solid grounding in theories, principles, and strategies of social influence as they apply to everyday contexts in which influence attempts take place. Students should gain familiarity with findings from empirical investigations on persuasion, social influence, and compliance-gaining, and will learn about strategies and techniques of persuasion relating to a wide variety of real-life communication contexts, situations, and settings. Students will also develop a better understanding of the many ways that persuasion theories and skills can be used as a tool for civic and political engagement.

PERSUASION & CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AT ILLINOIS STATE:

The American Democracy Project (ADP) at Illinois State is a cooperative effort by students, faculty, staff, and administration and the project involves a joint partnership between Academic and Student Affairs. The overarching goal of the ADP is to promote civic engagement, in many different forms, on the part of students, now and in the future. The project embraces all organized activity designed to promote constructive civic engagement on the part of students while they are on campus, and after they graduate. The ADP's goals connect directly with Illinois State's commitment to educate students for global citizenship as outlined in Educating Illinois.

Illinois State was selected as one of eight institutions to participate in a national ADP initiative, the Political Engagement Project (PEP). This project, directed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, addresses the serious problem of political disengagement in young people and advocates a dramatic increase in college and university efforts to strengthen student interest in politics. The primary mission of PEP is to enhance ISU students' awareness and understanding of political engagement and impact their level of political involvement and leadership. This project rests on the assumption that institutions of higher education must educate students for political

engagement in order to develop the kind of informed political participation that is essential for a meaningful democracy.

The COM 324 project aims to positively influence the following competencies related to civic and political engagement:

- Knowledge—an understanding of politics and political processes.
- Judgment/deliberation—abilities to use reasoning to justify claims, present evidence in support of a position, and weigh competing claims.
- Skills—the abilities to engage in political discourse and processes (e.g., developing communication, critical thinking, as well as information and media literacy skills).
- Motivation—being interested in public affairs, feeling committed to being actively engaged, and feeling a sense of political efficacy.

For more information about the ADP and PEP, please visit the following web site:

<https://civicengagement.illinoisstate.edu/>

MY APPROACH TO TEACHING:

First of all, please keep in mind that I AM HERE TO HELP! My goal as an instructor is to do all I can to create an environment in which we all can learn from each other safely, productively, and happily. Every person in this class contributes to that environment, and together we share the power to determine whether or not we live up to that goal.

Please do not hesitate to ask questions, or ask for help, in or out of class. (Unless there is a privacy issue at stake, in-class is often best, since your classmates may have the same questions or concerns that you do, and then you are helping them, too.)

If you have any special needs that it would help for me to be aware of, please do let me know. I am committed to helping every student attain the best quality of education she or he can.

COURSE POLICIES:

ATTENDANCE: It should be no surprise that in a communication class, I expect attendance. I expect you to be able to apply the things we discuss in class to your graded assignments. In addition, there may be several written assignments in this class. Some of these assignments may be done in class; others may be assigned as homework. Some assignments may involve using your textbook, so you are requested to bring your textbook to class. Assignments done in class **CANNOT** be made up for credit. If you are absent the day an in-class assignment is performed, you lose the assigned points (the same policy applies to quizzes and other graded assignments).

PROFESSIONALISM: (1) This class begins on time. Habitual lateness counts cumulatively as absence(s). (2) Should you need to miss a class or an appointment, I would appreciate the same courtesy and sense of responsibility you would extend to an employer. (3) Professionalism includes respecting others' opinions, not interrupting in class, being respectful to those who are speaking, and working together in a spirit of cooperation.

PROBLEMS: All work is expected on the date it is due. Make sure to anticipate those predictable problems so that you can prevent them. For example, running out of paper or ink, or losing something on a computer or flash drive that you did not backup are problems that need not occur if you are looking ahead.

TOUGHER PROBLEMS: All work is still expected on the date it is due. In emergencies I will make other arrangements with individual students but such cases are relatively rare. Like most instructors, I am more understanding if you keep me informed. If you encounter problems, please let me know right away as I may be able to help.

CHEATING/PLAGIARISM: Students are expected to be honest in all academic work, consistent with the academic integrity policy as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct*. All work is to be appropriately cited when it is borrowed, directly or indirectly, from another source. Unauthorized and unacknowledged collaboration on assignments and/or the presentation of someone else's work warrants plagiarism.

Students found to inadvertently commit acts of dishonesty will receive appropriate penalties specific to the assignment in question. Students found to commit intentional acts of dishonesty will receive a failing grade in the course and will be referred for appropriate disciplinary action through the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution.

Content generated by an Artificial Intelligence third-party service or site (AI-generated content) without proper attribution or authorization is another form of plagiarism. If you are unsure about whether something may be plagiarism or another form of academic dishonesty, please reach out to me to discuss it as soon as possible.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATIONS: Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability and/or medical/mental health condition should contact Student Access and Accommodation Services at 350 Fell Hall, (309) 438-5853, or visit the website at StudentAccess.IllinoisState.edu.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES: Life at college can get very complicated. Students sometimes feel overwhelmed, lost, experience anxiety or depression, struggle with relationship difficulties or diminished self-esteem. However, many of these issues can be effectively addressed with a little help. Student Counseling Services (SCS) helps students cope with difficult emotions and life stressors. Student Counseling Services is

staffed by experienced, professional psychologists and counselors, who are attuned to the needs of college students. The services are FREE and completely confidential. Find out more at counseling.illinoisstate.edu or by calling (309) 438-3655.

STUDENT WELL-BEING: It's hard to learn if you're hungry or couch surfing. If you are having difficulty affording groceries, accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or securing a safe and stable place to live, help may be available. I urge you to contact the Dean of Students Office to learn more.

CAMPUS SAFETY: Illinois State University is committed to maintaining a safe environment for the University community. Please take a few moments to make sure you are signed up for ISU Emergency Alerts at IllinoisState.edu/EmergencyAlert. Also, note the information posted in each classroom about emergency shelters and evacuation assembly areas (both are indicated on stickers inside every classroom). Additional safety information is available on the Campus Safety and Security website, Security.IllinoisState.edu.

EXTRA CREDIT: There will be a few extra credit opportunities for research participation. The extra credit points will be added to your final grade, and may not necessarily appear in the gradebook immediately upon your completion of the opportunity. There are no guarantees for extra credit, and it is each student's responsibility to be aware of and take advantage of such opportunities. You may receive extra credit for participating in **up to four** of the studies posted to the School of Communication's Research Announcement Board. The Research Announcement Board is updated as research studies are opened/closed, and it is your responsibility to access the Board and be aware of available opportunities. The Research Announcement Board can be accessed via: <https://sites.google.com/site/ilstusocstudies>

Each study you participate in is worth five points of extra credit. I will receive evidence of participation and the time of participation from the researcher(s) who administer the research studies at the conclusion of the semester; however, it is your responsibility to make sure that the researchers have the necessary evidence of your participation at the time of the study. Before participating in a study, please be sure to have your name, ULID (i.e., the part of your email before @ilstu.edu), instructor name, and course and section number ready, as you will need to provide these to receive credit. Research Credit can only be applied to one course for each study, unless specified otherwise on the Research Announcement Board. A maximum of 20 points can be earned from extra credit opportunities via the Research Announcement Board.

NON-RESEARCH EXTRA CREDIT: There may be some studies for which you are not eligible (e.g., recruiting based on gender or family structure) or in which you do not wish to take part. Reasonable alternatives are available for those not able or wanting to take part in specific studies, to ensure equitable non-research based opportunities. Throughout the semester, I will announce non-research opportunities for extra credit,

which may include attending a colloquium, reading a recent article or research paper, or attending an on-campus event and writing a summary of the connection of the event to course content. I will make these opportunities and specific details available as they arise.

GRADING:

Your grade for this course will depend on how many points you earn from the assignments listed below. **NOTE: Failure to turn in any of the course requirements may result in failure of the course.**

1. **Exams (200 points):** There will be one midterm and one final exam. The exams will assess your understanding course content as well as your application and integration abilities. The tests will consist of fill-in/short answer questions.
2. **Participation Log (50 points):** The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with a mechanism to carefully track your participation over the semester. To accomplish this goal, you will construct a log of your participation efforts including, but not limited to, the following activities: **level of preparedness for class** (e.g., completing readings, coming to class prepared to engage in discussion), **engagement in class discussion** (e.g., oral contributions to class discussion, participation in class activities), **outside of class involvement** (e.g., readings not assigned for the class related to course content, participation in on-campus activities related to course content, talking with others about course content), and **number of absences**. A full description of this assignment is attached to this syllabus.
3. **Group Project (50 points):** Your group will be responsible for facilitating a class session with regard to a persuasion topic. The class session will include an overview of the relevant literature, a student-led discussion, and any experiential activities that may apply. Evaluation will be based on your ability to accurately present current research findings, to effectively organize the class discussion, to ask thought-provoking questions, as well as your ability to effectively engage and involve students in the learning process. Details and further instruction will be provided.
 - a. One week before the date of your assigned discussion leadership, please provide a copy of your article(s) to every member of the class (including your instructor). **All articles should receive instructor approval before they are disseminated to the class!**
 - b. Your discussion facilitation outline (*just to the instructor*) is due on the day you present your article(s). Remember that your

discussion MUST include a reference to the assigned readings from the text, if applicable.

4. **Quizzes and Activities (points TBA):** I will give several unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. The answers to these quizzes will be quite obvious to one who has read the material! You may NOT make-up a quiz. Also note, any/all materials are handed out only once. If you are not in class to receive them, you should obtain the information from a fellow student.

5. Summary of Grading:

Exams	200 points
Participation	50 points
Group Project	50 points
Quizzes/Activities	TBA

The grading scale is a standard ten percentage point scale:

90-100% = A ; 80%-89% = B; 70%-79% = C; 60-69% = D; below 60% = F

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

Week 1

Jan. 13 (T) Course Orientation/Introductions

15 (R) What Should Students Enrolled in Persuasion Learn?

Reading:

Hunt, S. K., & Meyer, K. R. (2019). Engaging persuasion: What should undergraduate students enrolled in a persuasion class learn? *Journal of Communication Pedagogy*, 2, 12-16. doi:10.31446/JCP.2019.04

Week 2

20 (T) Examining the Scope of Persuasive Communication (**Read HM CH 1**)

22 (R) Ethical Implications of Persuasion (**Read HM CH 2**)

Week 3

27 (T) Persuasion in a Post-Truth Era

Readings:

Campbell, T., Griffin, L., & Neimand, A. (2017, January 25). Persuasion in a “post-truth” world. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from https://ssir.org/articles/entry/persuasion_in_a_post_truth_world

Waisbord, S. (2018). The elective affinity between post-truth communication and populist politics. *Communication Research and Practice*, 4, 17-34. doi: 10.1080/22041451.2018.1428928

29 (R) Using Persuasion for the Common Good (**Read HM CH 3**)

Week 4

Feb. 3 (T) Persuasive Campaigns and Social Movements (**Read HM CH 4**)

5 (R) Persuasive Campaigns and Movements Contd.

Week 5

10 (T) Theories Predicting Behavior (**Read HM Appendix B and HM CH 5**)

11 (R) Constructing Persuasive Messages (**Read HM CH 6**)

Week 6

17 (T) Source Characteristics and Persuasion (**Read HM CH 7**)

Additional Reading:

Nichols, T. (2017, March/April). How America lost faith in expertise and why that’s a giant problem. *Foreign Affairs*, 96(2), 60-73.

19 (R) Compliance-Gaining Techniques and Sequential Persuasion (**Read HM CH 8**)

Week 7

24 (T) Understanding Persuasive Misinformation and Fake News

Readings:

Flynn, D. J., Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2017). The nature and origins of

misperceptions: Understanding false and unsupported beliefs about politics. *Advances in Political Psychology*, 38, 127-150. doi: 10.1111/pops.12394

Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2012). *Misinformation and fact-checking: Research findings from social science*. Washington, DC: New America Foundation.

26 (R) Overview of Group Project

Week 8

March 3 (T) Review for Midterm

5 (R) **MIDTERM EXAM**

Week 9

NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK!!!

Week 10

17 (T) Leading Instructional Discussions (**Read HM Appendix A**)

19 (R) Message Processing Theories and Research (**Read HM CH 9**)

Week 11

24 (T) Receiving Persuasive Messages (**Read HM CH 10**)

26 (R) Theories of Behavioral Reactions (**Read HM CH 11**)

Week 12

31 (T) Language and Nonverbal Persuasion (**Read HM CH 12**)

April 2 (R) Reconsidering Ethics, Outrage Discourse, and the Fourth Era of Political Communication

Readings:

Sobieraj, S., & Berry, J. M. (2011). From incivility to outrage: Political discourse in blogs, talk radio, and cable news. *Political Communication*, 28, 19-41. doi: 10.1080/10584609.2010.542360

Semetko, H. A., & Tworzecki, H. (2018). Campaign strategies, media, and voters: The fourth era of political communication. In J. Fisher, E. Fieldhouse, M. N. Franklin, R. Gibson, M. Cantijoch, & C. Wlezien (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of elections, voting behavior, and public opinion* (pp. 441-457). New York: Routledge.

Week 13

7 (T) **Group 1 Presents**

9 (R) **Group 2 Presents**

Week 14

14 (T) **Group 3 Presents**

16 (R) **NO CLASS—CSCA Conference**

Week 15

21 (T) **Group 4 Presents**

23 (R) **Group 5 Presents**

Week 16

28 (T) **Group 6 Presents**

30 (R) Course Evaluations
Reflection and Synthesis of Course
Review for Final Exam
Participation Log Due

TBD **FINAL EXAM**

Participation Log Assignment

The purpose of this assignment is to provide you with a mechanism to carefully track your participation over the semester. To accomplish this goal, you will construct a log of your participation efforts including, but not limited to, the following activities: **level of preparedness for class** (e.g., completing readings, coming to class prepared to engage in discussion), **engagement in class discussion** (e.g., oral contributions to class discussion, participation in class activities), **outside of class involvement** (e.g., readings not assigned for the class related to course content, participation in on-campus activities related to course content, talking with others about course content), and **number of absences**. Most importantly, it is your responsibility to keep track of this information on a **DAILY** basis!

Use the following criteria to assess your participation in COM 324:

- A** = Outstanding participation (typically completely prepared for class having read all of the required readings and completed reading objectives, contributed to the classroom experience for self and others, allowed/encouraged others to contribute in class; had insightful comments/questions for classmates and instructor; took a leading role in class activities; substantial outside of class involvement).
- B** = Good participation (prepared for class having looked over required readings and partially completed reading objectives; offered good comments and took an active role in class activities; significant outside of class involvement).
- C** = Average participation (responded to questions adequately; moderately prepared, participated in class activities; some outside of class involvement).
- D** = Poor participation (often poorly prepared; responded to questions, but briefly and with little elaboration; came to class late; little outside of class involvement).
- F** = Insufficient participation (came to class, but typically contributed little or nothing; continually arrived in class more than 10 minutes late).

In addition, the following should also be taken into consideration as you prepare your participation log:

- If you are absent from class more than three times over the course of the semester, you cannot earn higher than a B for participation; more than four you cannot earn higher than a C for participation; more than five you cannot earn higher than a D for participation
- You must develop an entry for each day of class—if you are absent you must make an entry explaining why.
- You will write a brief paper (2-3 pages) to be turned in on **April 30, 2026** in which you argue for the grade you should receive (**50 points possible**).

Remember, it is **YOUR** responsibility to keep track of this material over the course of the semester!