

PSYC 424

The Psychology of Communication and Persuasion



Spring 2022

The University of Maryland

Mondays, 2:00 – 3:15 PM

BLD3 Room 4215

Dr. Edward Pallas

edpallas@umd.edu

Edward.pallas@montgomerycountymd.gov

301-500-8528 (cell)

Office hours by appointment

Course Description

Two of the most crucial life-skills are communication and persuasion. The good news is both are skills. These skills can be learned, practiced, and developed. They are also interdependently related. Developing effective communication skills leads to an increase in your ability to persuade others. Being able to persuade others involves using various forms of communication in a competent manner. The bad news is advertisers bombard you with messages about their products, services, and offerings every day. You regularly face overt and covert influence from family, friends, groups, and strangers. In fact, you are being influenced right now.

The primary objective of this course is to provide students with an understanding of persuasion theory, research, and practice. We will examine how characteristics of the sender (e.g., credibility, attractiveness, likability), the message (e.g., arguments, emotional appeals), the receiver (e.g., intelligence, culture, cognitive complexity), and the channel (e.g., verbal vs. nonverbal) influence the effect of persuasive messages on attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.

To achieve the primary objective, we will need to meet three goals. The first is to teach you how to persuade yourself through examining your own habits (both good and bad). You have to understand how to persuade yourself before you can focus on persuading others. The second is to teach you how to become a better communicator and ethical persuader (sorry, you will have to swear an oath to only use your newly developed powers for good, never evil). The third goal, speaking of evil, is to recognize and be able to resist influence attempts, especially those of an unethical nature, by others.

To state this a different way, the specific learning outcomes for the course include:

- To understand how persuasion theory and research guide the practice of persuasion.
- To understand oneself and how persuasion theory may be used to adopt/extinguish habits.
- To critically analyze and apply persuasion theory and research to real-world persuasive messages.

Interested? Read on because with great power comes great responsibility.

Course Structure

PSYC 424 is scheduled to be a hybrid course with one in-person meeting each week. This means you will be required to be physically present in each class. While attending class you will be required, per University Policy, to wear a mask. You may find this policy [HERE](#).

The weekly meeting will be augmented by reading and online assignments that include discussion boards, recorded lectures, and assigned videos.

Some coursework will be conducted through our course space on CANVAS/ELMS. Coursework conducted for PSYC 424 will be organized into weekly **Learning Modules**. The class meetings will occur (hopefully in-person) each week. Attendance and participation is expected during these sessions.

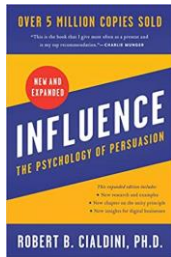
It now appears we will begin the semester online and (hopefully) transition to in-person during week 3. Note, to earn full participation points during online sessions you will need to be present and participate, with your camera ON, during each ZOOM meeting.

I will be available to you through email and/or through scheduled ZOOM meetings barring unforeseen circumstances, all emails will be answered within 48 hours of receipt of them.

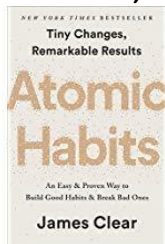
Required and Recommended Materials

Three books will be required for this class. One will be provided in an online format, the other two will need to be purchased. There is a fourth book, but it is optional. Because the class is online this semester, other information you will need to succeed in class will be disseminated through online lectures and other online materials.

Book #1 Cialdini, Robert (2009) Influence, New and Expanded: The Psychology of Persuasion, Hardcover Harper Business; Expanded ed. edition (May 4, 2021)



Book #2: Clear, James (2018). Atomic Habits. New York: Avery. (This is now an OPTIONAL TEXT)



Time & Reading Commitment

WARNING - This course is a significant time commitment. It requires a great deal of time and effort to work through the assigned reading material, participate in class discussions, and submit the assignments on time. I cannot tell you how many students have complained that they expected a course with an online component to take less time than a face-to-face one. This simply is not the case. The only time you save is your commute to campus. The reality is the time commitment is no less extensive than a traditional classroom experience. However, the advantage of distance learning is that you decide which specific hours to devote.

Please note: The University guideline is that students should spend 2 to 3 out-of-class hours per week for every credit hour taken. Because PSYC 424 is a three-credit class, **you should expect to spend, on average, 6 to 9 hours each week on your work.** If your schedule does not allow you to put in the necessary time to master the course material, please consider dropping the course and re-registering for it when we are able to offer it in a different format. PSYC 424 may require more work than some of your other classes, but I promise you will get more out of it in return.

Rights, Responsibilities, and Expectations

to design and manage a learning environment that is rigorous, engaging, and focused on evidence-based teaching practices. As a student, your role is to take personal responsibility for your learning and actively engage in all aspects of the course. Below I list some of the rights, responsibilities, and expectations you have as members of this class.

As a student, you have the right to expect that:

- All your work will be evaluated by reasonable, objective, and transparent criteria intended to assess learning.
- You will be treated with equality, professionalism, and respect.
- I will be prepared and on-time for every scheduled meeting.
- I will maintain a classroom conducive to active learning, discussion, and critical thinking.

- I will, when possible, integrate contemporary examples, videos, and activities to reinforce learning.
- I will be available to assist with coursework and to offer referrals to campus resources upon request.
- I will read and respond to your emails within 24 hours on weekdays. All emails sent over the weekend will be responded to on Monday.
- I will do my best to answer any questions you have, and if I don't know the answer, I'll do my best to work with you so we can find it (in other words, I won't just make stuff up).

As an instructor, I have the right to expect that you will:

- Devote the necessary time and energy to master the course material (see time commitment above).
- Remain actively engaged in class each week.
- Take responsibility for your education. That means asking questions when you have them, managing your time to complete the work when due, actively participating in class discussions, and getting anything you might have missed from a fellow classmate.
- Check into our CANVAS/ELMS classroom and your email at least once in every 24 hour period.
- Adhere to all course and University policies and procedures, deadlines, requirements, and grading criteria (see below)

Course Policies and Procedures

The University of Maryland's conduct policy indicates that course syllabi should refer to a webpage of course-related policies and procedures. Accordingly, a student-facing page of policies and resources is posted here: <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>. Below are course-specific policies and procedures which explain how these University policies will be implemented in this class.

1. Satisfactory Performance: The University expects students to take full responsibility for their academic work and academic progress. The student, to progress satisfactorily, must meet all the requirements of this course. In addition, each student is expected to listen to the online lectures regularly and promptly, to be prepared to discuss the required material, and to perform satisfactorily on all course assignments.

2. ELMS/Testudo: Students should be familiar with the University of Maryland's Enterprise Learning Management System (ELMS) as well as Testudo Interactive Web Services (Testudo).

ELMS (powered by CANVAS) will be used as our primary platform for this class. Within the Modules, students will have access to all lectures, assignments, and supplemental reading materials. ELMS will also be used to make course announcements and provide students with online access to their individual grades (login at <http://elms.umd.edu>, select our course, and then click on "Grades" in the course menu).

Testudo can be used by students to check on final course grades once they have been submitted to the University Registrar. On Testudo go to <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/Registrar.html>, look under "24 Hour Access," and select "View Your Grades".

It is the student's responsibility to check ELMS/CANVAS on a daily basis to obtain course materials and to see if any class announcements have been made.

3. Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The University of Maryland's Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) provides reasonable accommodations to qualified individuals to ensure equal access to services, programs, and activities sponsored by the University of Maryland. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this class, please contact ADS (<https://counseling.umd.edu/ads/>) and your professor as soon as possible.

4. Written Assignments: All written assignments should be typed in 12-point font, double spaced, with one-inch margins on all sides. Use black ink for all assignments. Proofread your work! Typos and grammatical errors will result in a deduction of assignment points. All assignments should follow the guidelines of the American Psychological Association, available in the APA manual (7th ed.) or online at:

- <https://apastyle.apa.org/>
- <https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/student-paper-setup-guide.pdf>
- <https://apastyle.apa.org/instructional-aids/tutorials-webinars>

Unless otherwise specified, graded assignments will be uploaded to our course space on ELMS/CANVAS. No emailed assignments will be accepted.

Please follow the following directions to upload an assignment to ELMS/Canvas:

- Once you have entered our CANVAS classroom, Click on “Assignments” on the left-hand menu in our classroom.
- Then click on the assignment you are supposed to be submitting (e.g., Group Project).
- On the far righthand side of the screen will be a + sign with the words “submit assignment” next to it.
- Click on the “Submit Assignment” link and the directions will prompt you to upload your assignment.
- Click “Browse” to find the assignment on your hard drive.
- Then remember to click “Submit Assignment” to get it to me.

5. Questions about Assignments: Please ask all questions you may have about an assignment by 4 PM the day before the assignment is due. Any questions asked after that time may not be answered in time for you to make changes to your work.

Note Regarding Missed Classes: While my expectation is that you attend each class. On the first day of class I will provide you with the opportunity to obtain contact information for two other classmates. Please ensure you have correct contact information because your classmates are who you call/text/message/for copies of their notes from the class session.

Please see the U of MD policy for excused absences [HERE](#). YOU are responsible for information and material missed on the day of absence. Use these contacts to obtain class notes for the day you were absent. For missed class, please do the following:

1. Notify me in a timely manner, that you will miss class.
2. If it falls under the excused absences policy, provide the necessary documentation.
3. Obtain lecture/discussion notes from one of your classmates
4. **Optional : If you would like to make up class participation points** a paper must be submitted by the start of the following class. This paper is to be 2-4 pages in length and should summarize the material we covered during the missed class. For example, you have an excused absence for a class where the reading assignment was chapter two of the Cialdini book. You must submit a 2-4 page paper, summarizing the contents of the chapter and specific concepts and/or ideas that you could apply to your own life. This paper would have to be submitted, via email, prior to the beginning of the following class. **If you also missed a reading check-in, and would like to make up the points** for that assignment, the above paper is to be 3-6 pages in length. Notify me that you have submitted the paper.

Missed assignments must be made up within 5 calendar days of the student’s return to school. No missed assignments will be accepted for a grade after that time.

7. Questions about Grades/Grade Disputes: All questions about graded assignments or exams must be brought to your instructor (in writing) within **3 calendar days** from the day the grade is posted or the class session in which the assignment/exam is returned to the class (whichever is earlier). After this time, the instructor will provide information, but will not engage in any discussion of a grade.

8. Academic Integrity: It is expected that each student will uphold academic integrity in this course and that, with the exception of group work, students will complete assignments on their own. The University’s approved *Code of Academic Integrity* is available on the web at: <http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/iii100a.html> and should be read. The *Code* defines academic dishonesty as *cheating* (intentionally using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information, or study aids in any academic exercise); *fabrication* (intentional and unauthorized falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise); *facilitating academic dishonesty* (intentionally or knowingly helping or attempting to help another student to violate any provision of this Code), and *plagiarism* (intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any

academic exercise). The *Code* prohibits students from cheating on exams; plagiarizing papers; submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization; buying papers; submitting fraudulent documents; and, forging signatures.

Academic dishonesty of any sort will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty constitutes grounds for failure on the relevant assignment and potential failure of the entire course. If you have any questions about what practices are, and are not, acceptable, direct them to the instructor before the assignment is due.

9. University of Maryland Honor Pledge: The University of Maryland hasationally recognized Honor Code, administered by the Student Honor Council. The University of Maryland Honor Pledge reads:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.

Unless you are specifically advised to the contrary, the Pledge statement should be signed on the front cover of all papers, projects, or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course. Students who fail to write and sign the Pledge will be asked to confer with the instructor.

10. Copyright Protection for Class Materials: Course materials that exist in a tangible medium, such as written or recorded lectures, PowerPoint presentations, handouts, and tests, are copyright protected. Students may not copy and distribute such materials except for personal use and with the instructor's permission.

12. Incompletes: The grade of incomplete ("I") is given only to a student whose work in a course has been qualitatively satisfactory, when, because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, the student has been unable to complete some small portion of the course work. In no case will an incomplete be given to a student who has not completed major course assignments. If you miss the final exam and have a university-approved excuse, you must contact your instructor **within 24 hours** and sign an **incomplete contract**. Without it, your course grade will be calculated based on zero points (an "F") for the missed exam. It is the student's responsibility to request arrangements for the completion of the course work.

13. Course Evaluation: Students are expected to complete the University of Maryland's campus-wide online course evaluation system, CourseEvalUM which can be accessed through our course space on ELMS/CANVAS(www.elms.umd.edu).

Assignment Descriptions

PSYC 424 is organized into weekly Learning Modules. In each module students will be expected to accomplish the following tasks: (1) listen to and/or read online lectures and complete required readings; (2) post responses to weekly discussion topics covering class material; (3) respond to the discussion posts of fellow classmates; and (4) ask questions when clarification is needed.

In addition to the weekly module work and discussions, students will be expected to take two exams (i.e., midterm and the final exam). Below are descriptions of all graded work:

1. Class Participation: Class participation will be earned during the in-person class (and possibly online) meetings. To earn full points for each class meeting you must be on time, be fully engaged in the discussion, and remain until the end of the meeting. Coming late to class or leaving early will result in a partial loss of points for that meeting.

If we must switch to virtual meetings our sessions will be conducted via Zoom meetings. To earn full points for each live virtual session students are expected to:

- sign into the Zoom session at or before the class start time (I strongly suggest signing in 5 minutes before)
- **have your camera on and your face in view**
- be present during the entire meeting

- participate in the lesson through voice or chat comments

2. Discussion Board Assignments: Discussion participation will be earned during the asynchronous learning modules. Each student is expected to actively participate in discussing the material covered in the learning Modules each week. To that end, students will be required to participate in 8 Discussion Board Assignments during the semester. Topics and assignments will vary from week to week, but they will typically ask students to think critically about the week’s material and/or apply what they know to real-world settings.

- **Students are expected to respond to ALL the discussion topics posted each week.**
- **Students are also expected to respond to at least one of their classmates in each of the discussion areas.**
- You will not see your classmates' responses until you create one of your own, but do not worry--they will magically appear immediately after you post your own!
- Unless otherwise posted in the syllabus,
- **Initial Discussion Posts will be due by Thursday 11:59 PM (EST).**
- **Responses to classmates will be due by Friday 11:59 PM (EST).**

The discussion areas will lock Fridays at 11:59 PM (EST), and no additional responses will be accepted. Think of the discussion area like a party. Once the party is over, there is no one left to have a conversation with! Because there may be several discussion topics to complete each week, students **MUST** work on discussion topics throughout the week to be able to finish all the topics (and responses) on time.

Each Discussion Topic will be worth 10 points and graded according to the following Rubric:

Discussion Participation Grading Rubric

9 to 10 points	8 to 8.9 points	7 to 7.9 points	1 to 6.9 points	0 points
<p>The student’s initial response demonstrates a thorough understanding (i.e., mastery) of concepts covered in the assignment. The student answers all aspects of the question; the student’s answers are complete, correct, and appropriate for the questions. Arguments are convincing, and the student supports his/her points using examples from readings, lectures, and/or other materials provided in the course.</p> <p>The student responds to at least one classmate and offers insightful and/or thought-provoking feedback.</p>	<p>The student’s initial response demonstrates a solid understanding of concepts covered in the assignment. The student answers all aspects of the question; the student’s answers are complete, generally correct, and appropriate for the question. Arguments are generally convincing, and the student uses a number of examples and/or other supporting evidence to support his/her claims, but his/her response is sometimes generic. Most supporting evidence comes from readings, lectures, and/or other materials</p>	<p>The student’s initial response demonstrates an adequate understanding of concepts covered in the assignment. The student answers all aspects of the question; the student’s answers are complete, but the answers are sporadically correct and not always appropriate for the question. Arguments are not convincing, and the student uses insufficient or general evidence to support his/her claims. Little supporting evidence comes from readings, lectures, and/or</p>	<p>The student’s initial response does not demonstrate an adequate understanding of class concepts covered in the assignment. The student does not answer all aspects of the question or the student’s answers are incomplete. The student’s answers are not appropriate for the question, are too vague, too short, or otherwise ineffective at demonstrating understanding or engagement with course material. Little to no supporting material from readings, lectures, and/or other materials</p>	<p>The student did not post a response and did not comment on the response of a classmate.</p>

	<p>provided in the course.</p> <p>The student responds to at least one classmate. Most of the feedback is insightful and/or thought-provoking.</p>	<p>other materials provided in the course.</p> <p>The student responds to at least one classmate, but the feedback merely agrees with or parrots what was already said. It provides little insight beyond the initial response.</p>	<p>provided in the course.</p> <p>The student does not respond to at least one classmate.</p>	
--	--	---	---	--

3. Compliment Paper (2-3 pages)

This assignment requires you to use compliments to understand their impact on influence and persuasion. You will be required to give at least two compliments each day for a period of at least two weeks. The compliments should be in-person (or via face-to-face video if in-person is not an option) twice each day. Ideally, you will compliment different people each day. You will also keep a journal that reflects who you complimented and their reaction to the compliment. You will turn in a copy of your journal ((attach as pdf, word doc, etc)along with your written paper. Proofread your work. No "vomit drafts" please. Address the following questions in your paper:

- What was the most meaningful compliment you gave? Why?
- How did it make you feel?
- What did you learn (if anything) from the exercise?
- How does the exercise apply to persuasion and communication?
- Why did I (meaning you) have to do this exercise? (what was the point of the exercise, do you think?)

Further clarification will be given in class.

4. Examinations: There are two exams in this course (i.e., a midterm and the final exam). The final exam will be cumulative. Material for exams will come from in-person/online lectures, reading assignments, audiovisual presentations, and class discussions. The format of the exams will vary; but, multiple-choice, matching, short answer, and/or essay questions will typically be used. All examination questions (including any essay questions) will be graded in an objective manner. That is, for any examination item, responses will be awarded points to the degree to which the answer corresponds to a predetermined set of criteria (i.e., a predetermined correct answer).

Assignment Grades

Each item will be weighted as follows:

Class Participation	(10 x 15 points each)	150 points
DB Assignments	(5 x 15 points each)	75 points
Reading Check-ins	(8 x 10 points each)	80 points
Compliment paper		100 points
Midterm Exam		100 points
Final Exam		100 points

Total points for the semester 605 points

LATE WORK, if accepted, will be reduced by a letter grade, so please plan to have it submitted well before the scheduled deadline.

Final Grade Computation

GRADES ARE NOT GIVEN BUT EARNED. Your grade is determined by your individual performance on the various learning assessments in the course (they are not curved). Course grades will be computed by taking the total number of points the student earns in the class, dividing that number by the total number of possible points for the class, and multiplying by 100 to obtain a percent. Being close to an absolute cutoff is not the same thing as making that cut (89.99 \neq 90.0), so please do not ask if I will round up your letter grade just because you are close (that would be unethical for me to do). With the exception of calculation errors, no grade changes will be made to your final grade at the end of the semester. If earning a particular grade is important to you, please speak with me at the beginning of the semester so that I can offer some helpful suggestions for achieving your goal.

Final course percentages will be posted on ELMS and course letter grades will be submitted to UMEG. The following symbols are used on the student's permanent record for all courses in which he or she is enrolled after the initial registration and schedule adjustment period:

A+ (100%); A (93%—99%); A- (90%—92%)

B+ (88%—89%); B (83%—87%); B- (80%—82%)

C+ (78%—79%); C (73%—77%); C- (70%—72%)

D+ (68%—69%); D (63%—67%); D- (60%—62%)

F (less than 60%)

These marks remain part of the student's permanent record and may only be changed by the original instructor with approval by the Department Chair and the Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities.

Class Week	Date	Subject(s)	Content
1	1/24	ZOOM MEETING Introduction to course. Discussion Board (DB) assigned Part 1 – Introduce Yourself Part 2 – Perception and persuasion Due Friday by Midnight For Next class meeting read: Cialdini Introduction	Class introductions, expectations, and syllabus review. Assigned readings, Discussion boards, and class format
2	1/31	ZOOM MEETING (or lecture recording) Class Discussion: Cialdini Introduction DB assignment – Cognitive Dissonance Due by Friday at midnight For Next class meeting read: Cialdini Chapter 1	Discussion, what is persuasion and why study it? 5 Benefits of studying persuasion. 2 Criticisms of persuasion. Cognitive Dissonance Theory (CDT)
3	2/07	ZOOM MEETING (or lecture recording) DB Assignment -Decision Making Due by Friday at midnight For Next class meeting read: Cialdini Chapter 2	Reading Check in #1 (Intro and Ch 1) Click, Run Levers of Influence
4	2/14	Class Discussion on Cialdini Chapter 2	Reading Check in #2 (Chapter 2) Reciprocation
5	2/21	PRESIDENT’S DAY HOLIDAY No In-Person Class Meeting DB Assignment- Heuristics Due by Friday at midnight	Start your compliment journal
6	2/28	Class Discussion on Cialdini Chapter 3 <u>For next class read:</u> Cialdini Chapter 4 Cialdini pgs. 127-161)	Reading Check in #3 (Chapter 3) Liking (work on compliment paper)
7	3/07	Class Discussion on Chapter 4 (pgs. 127-161) Midterm review	Reading Check in #4 Social Proof (first half)
8	3/14	Midterm exam (Cialdini up to page 161)	Enjoy! Read Cialdini pages 161-199 this week to get ahead.
9	3/21	SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS MEETINGS	Read Cialdini Chapter 5 to get ahead
10	3/28	ZOOM MEETING (or lecture recording) No In-person class meeting DB Assignment	Work on compliment paper

		<u>For next class read:</u> Cialdini Chapter 4 (pgs. 161-199) Cialdini Chapter 5	
11	4/05	Class Discussion on Chapter 4 (second half) and Chapter 5 <u>For next class read:</u> Cialdini Chapter 6	Compliment Paper Due Reading Check in #5 Authority
12	4/11	Class Discussion on Chapter 6 <u>For next class read:</u> Cialdini Chapter 7	Reading Check in #6 Scarcity
13	4/18	Class Discussion on Chapter 7 <u>For next class meeting read:</u> Cialdini Chapter 8	Reading Check in #7 Commitment & Consistency
14	4/25	No In-person class meeting (tentative) DB Assignment <u>For next class meeting read:</u> Cialdini Chapter 9	
15	5/02	Class Discussion on Chapters 8 & 9	Reading Check in #8
16	5/09	Review for Final Exam	

Final Exam schedule TBD