

# **PUBLIC OPINION, PERSUASION AND ENGAGEMENT**

**IE University**

Professor: **RUTH PALMER**

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Academic year: 22-23

Degree course: FIRST

Semester: 2<sup>o</sup>

Category: BASIC

Number of credits: 6.0

Language: English

## **PREREQUISITES**

### **SUBJECT DESCRIPTION**

This course is divided into two parts. In the first part, we discuss the concept of public opinion. We explore the history of the concept, and debate ideas about what the ideal role for the public is in a democracy. We conclude the unit on public opinion with a case study in which we apply the normative theories to recent controversies over digital public spheres. In the remaining two-thirds of the course we explore the concept of persuasion. We begin by exploring the history of the concept and defining what we mean by it. We then dissect its component parts, starting with what exactly attitudes are, and moving on to a review of research on how attitudes form and change. In the final third of the course we study different persuasive techniques, and practice applying them in persuasive campaigns of our own design.

### **OBJECTIVES AND SKILLS**

- Develop an understanding of how thinking about public opinion, and ways public opinion has been communicated, have evolved over time
- Get to know key issues, concepts, and theories in public opinion and persuasion today, as research and practice
- Become familiar with strategies used in persuasive campaigns
- Develop the ability to use social scientific principles to critically evaluate persuasive approaches, their effectiveness and their impact on society and public opinion.
- Use scholarly, theoretical, and empirical evidence to craft persuasive oral and written arguments.

### **METHODOLOGY**

In this course students learn through in-class lectures, activities, and discussions that take place during class sessions, in combination with reading, writing, and research completed individually outside of class. Class sessions focus on one or two main theories or topics related to public opinion and persuasion, which are introduced in the readings that students complete individually before class. During class these are further explicated and critiqued through interactive lectures, activities, and discussions. Students then practice applying the theories and concepts they have learned in a series of exercises over the course of the semester in which they demonstrate their growing command of the material and ability to use it with increasing independence to analyze issues and questions about public opinion and persuasion that are of particular interest to them.

Teaching methodology	Weighting	Estimated time a student should dedicate to prepare for and participate in
Lectures	26.67 %	40 hours
Discussions	20.0 %	30 hours
Exercises	20.0 %	30 hours
Group work	13.33 %	20 hours
Other individual studying	20.0 %	30 hours
TOTAL	100.0 %	150 hours

## PROGRAM

### SESSION 1 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

#### INTRODUCTION

Topic 1: Discussion of syllabus, and the expectations of students and professor

Topic 2: What is public opinion and why study it?

No readings due.

### SESSION 2 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

#### A HISTORICAL LOOK AT THE IDEA OF PUBLIC OPINION

Topic: How has public opinion been thought about and communicated over time?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Glynn et al. Chapter Two, "The History of Public Opinion," in Public Opinion, pp. 35-54 only. (ced)*

### SESSION 3 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

#### NORMATIVE THEORIES OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE I: REPRESENTATIVE LIBERALISM

Topic: Can we call it a public sphere if our representatives make our decisions for us?

*Video: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Ferree et. al., "Normative Criteria for the Public Sphere," in Shaping Abortion Discourse, pp. 205-210 only (ced)*  
*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Excerpts from Lippmann's Phantom Public, from The Idea of the Public Sphere (Grispud, ed.), pp. 25-42. (ced)*

### SESSION 4 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

## NORMATIVE THEORIES OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE II: PARTICIPATORY LIBERALISM

Topic: Is it realistic to expect all citizens to be actively involved in the public sphere?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Ferree et al., "Normative Criteria for the Public Sphere," in Shaping Abortion Discourse, pp. 210-215 only (ced)*

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Dewey, John. Excerpt from The Public and its Problems, (ced)*

## SESSION 5 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

### NORMATIVE THEORIES OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE III: DISCURSIVE THEORY

Topic: Can't we all just talk about things rationally and call that a public sphere?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Ferree et al., "Normative Criteria for the Public Sphere," in Shaping Abortion Discourse, pp. 215-222 (ced)*

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Habermas, "The Public Sphere," in Rethinking Popular Culture, (Mukerji and Schudson, eds) pp. 398-404. (ced)*

## SESSION 6 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

### NORMATIVE THEORIES OF THE PUBLIC SPHERE IV: CONSTRUCTIONIST THEORY

Topic: Is there a more inclusive alternative to rational discourse?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Ferree et al., "Normative Criteria for the Public Sphere," in Shaping Abortion Discourse, pp. 222-231 only (ced)*

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Fraser, Nancy. "Rethinking the Public Sphere," from The Idea of the Public Sphere (Grispud, ed.), pp. 127-147. (ced)*

## SESSION 7 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

CATCH UP DAY

## SESSION 8 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

### APPLYING THE NORMATIVE THEORIES TO CURRENT CONCERNS

Topic 1: Debating a current topic related to digital public spheres.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): TBD.

## SESSION 9 (ASYNCHRONOUS)

STUDENTS WORK ON ESSAYS. INDIVIDUAL MEETINGS WITH THE PROFESSOR AS NEEDED.

Topic: Public opinion essays.

## SESSION 10 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

### INTRODUCING PERSUASION

Topic 1: persuasion in the current media environment

Topic 2: basic definitions

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Perloff Chapters 1 and 2 (See Bibliography)*

\*\*\*Essay I due between sessions 10 and 11, exact date TBD\*\*\*

## **SESSION 11 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

HISTORICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS

Topic 1: Rhetoric and its descendants

Topic 2: Is persuasion ethical?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Perloff Chapter 3 (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 12 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

CASE STUDY APPLYING BASIC IDEAS ABOUT PERSUASION

Topic: applying persuasion concepts we've seen so far

*Video: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Watch Jonestown: The Life and Death of Peoples' Temple (Youtube)*

## **SESSION 13 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

ATTITUDES: DEFINITION AND STRUCTURE

Topic: What's the distinction between attitudes, beliefs and values? How do attitudes work?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Perloff, first half of Chapter 4 (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 14 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

ATTITUDES: DEFINITION AND STRUCTURE, continued

Topic: Theory and research on strong attitudes

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Perloff, second half of chapter 4

## **SESSION 15 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

PASSIONS AND STRONG ATTITUDES

Topic: Theory and research on strong attitudes

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM):

*Book Chapters: Perloff chapter 5, pp. 101-125 (See Bibliography)*

*Podcast: Case study on strong attitudes: Listen to the prologue and Part I, "Hollaback Girl" in this episode of the radio show This American Life. (This American Life)*

## **SESSION 16 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

PASSIONS AND STRONG ATTITUDES, CONTINUED.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM): Case study on strong attitudes: Watch this 30-minute documentary, and read over the article and photo gallery about Americans' attitudes on guns, which was published in the British newspaper the Guardian.

### **SESSION 17 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

SUBCONSCIOUS ATTITUDES AND IMPLICIT BIAS

Topic: Theory and research on implicit bias

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Perloff Chapter 5, pp. 125-133 (See Bibliography)*

### **SESSION 18 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

SUBCONSCIOUS ATTITUDES AND IMPLICIT BIAS CONTINUED

Topic: Theory and research on implicit bias

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM): Case study on implicit bias: Listen to the prologue and ACT 2 of this one-hour episode of the radio show This American Life, which is about racial tensions between primarily white police officers and primarily black communities.

### **SESSION 19 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

FUNCTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ATTITUDES

Topic: What are attitudes for? How do they affect our behavior?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM): Perloff, first half of Chapter 6 (See Bibliography)*

### **SESSION 20 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

FUNCTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF ATTITUDES, CONTINUED

Topic: What are attitudes for? How do they affect our behavior?

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM): Perloff, second half of Chapter 6 (See Bibliography)*

### **SESSION 21 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

PROCESSING PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATIONS PART I

Topic 1: Elaboration Likelihood Model: Peripheral Processing

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM): Perloff, first half of Chapter 8 (See Bibliography)*

### **SESSION 22 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

PROCESSING PERSUASIVE COMMUNICATIONS PART II

Topic: Elaboration Likelihood Model: Central Processing

*Book Chapters: TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM): Perloff, second half of Chapter 8 (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 23 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### SOURCES AND PERSUASION

Topics: How characteristics of the source affect persuasiveness

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

*Book Chapters: Perloff chapter 9 (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 24 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

### SOURCES AND PERSUASION

Topics: How characteristics of the source affect persuasiveness

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

*Book Chapters: Perloff chapter 10 (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 25 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### FUNDAMENTALS OF THE MESSAGE: NARRATIVE AND FRAMING

Topic: How a good story and the right frame affect persuasiveness

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

*Book Chapters: Perloff, first half of Chapter 11 (See Bibliography)*

*Video: From One Second to the Next (Youtube)*

## **SESSION 26 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### FUNDAMENTALS OF THE MESSAGE: LANGUAGE

Topic: How language choices affect persuasiveness

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

*Video: This is Water (Youtube)*

## **SESSION 27 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

### EMOTIONAL MESSAGE APPEALS

Topic: How fear and guilt appeals can have persuasive effects (or not)

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS TO CONFIRM):

*Book Chapters: Perloff chapter 12 (See Bibliography)*

## **SESSION 28 (ASYNCHRONOUS)**

### EMOTIONAL MESSAGE APPEALS

Topic: How fear and guilt appeals can have persuasive effects (or not)

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT (SEE ANNOUNCEMENTS SECTION TO CONFIRM):

Discussing your own examples of emotional appeals in the discussion board.

## **SESSION 29 (LIVE IN-PERSON)**

### EXAM REVIEW

Study for the exam, optional exam review session, and meetings about persuasion case study essay.

## SESSION 30 (LIVE IN-PERSON)

### FINAL EXAM

**\*\*Persuasion case study due date TBD\*\***

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Compulsory

- Richard M. Perloff. (2021). *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 20th Century*. 7th Edition. Routledge. ISBN 9780367509842 (Printed)

## EVALUATION CRITERIA

Evaluation is based on a student's attendance and informed participation in the sessions; activities and exercises, including those assigned for the non-class learning sessions; two essays; and a final exam. Evaluation for each component is described below and will be discussed in greater detail in class prior to each assignment.

**\*\*Please note that for all assignments with a deadline, 2 points will be automatically deducted for each day the assignment is late.\*\***

Criteria	Percentage	Comments
Activities and exercises	25 %	
Final Exam	20 %	
Essays	40 %	
Attendance & Class Participation	10 %	

### **Attendance, Informed Participation, and Contribution to the Learning Atmosphere (10%)**

You are expected to come to class. It is mandatory to attend 70% of the classes. Students who do not comply with this percentage of attendance lose the 1st and 2nd exams and go directly to the 3rd one.

Beyond simply showing up, participation in class discussions and activities is an important component of this course. Recall that listening carefully is as important a component of participation as speaking. Please be aware of your own style of participation: if you find it difficult to speak up in class, push yourself to do so. If you realize you tend to dominate discussions, make a point of listening to others.



Your participation grade at the end of the semester will be based cumulatively on your contributions over the course of the semester. Participation is graded using the criteria below. It looks complicated, but in practice it comes down to this: you should expect to receive below a 7 if you miss more than 4 sessions; come to class consistently unprepared; are disruptive (this includes having to be repeatedly asked to put away devices or pay attention); do not participate at all or do not do so in a positive, thoughtful, and considerate way; or in any other way do not contribute positively to the learning atmosphere. To receive a 7 or above you must come to class consistently prepared and contribute thoughtfully and positively to class activities and discussions. The difference between a 7 and a 10 is based on the level of analysis, thoughtfulness, responsiveness, and originality in your contributions, as well as your respect for the contributions of others. The average level of participation usually satisfies the criteria for a "7", which would correspond to a "B".[1]

#### Grade Criteria

##### 0 - 4,9:

When present, not disruptive.

Tries to respond when called on, but does not offer much.

Demonstrates very infrequent involvement in discussion.

##### 5,0 - 6,9:

Demonstrates adequate preparation: knows basic reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them.

Offers straightforward information (e.g., straight from the reading), without elaboration or very infrequently (perhaps once a class).

Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on.

Demonstrates sporadic involvement.

##### 7 - 8,9:

Demonstrates good preparation: knows reading facts well, has thought through implications of them.

Offers interpretations and analysis of reading material (more than just facts) to class.

Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds thoughtfully to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion.

Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement.

##### 9,0 - 10,0:

Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed readings exceptionally well, relating it to other material (e.g., other readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.).

Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of class material (e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further).

Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, responds very thoughtfully to other students' comments, contributes to cooperative argument-building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc.

Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement.

#### **Exercises and activities - 25%**

This component is an average of all the exercises and activities we do throughout the semester, including small group projects, discussion board posts, and other in-class and non-class learning activities. We may have some quizzes if it becomes apparent that students need an extra incentive to complete the assigned readings.

#### **1 public opinion essay – 20%**

Short essay 1: Take any idea about, or approach to, public opinion that we have learned about up until this point in the course and write an argumentative essay in which you make an original claim about the idea and support it. This is an opportunity to focus your attention on any of the ideas that have come up so far about public opinion that are of particular interest to you. Evaluation criteria for the essay will be handed out and discussed in class.

#### **1 persuasion case study essay– 20%**



Students will be required to pick a pictorial advertisement (not video) and analyze its persuasive strategy by applying theories from class. The paper must explain the theory, explain why it is appropriate for analyzing this advertisement, and then analyze the ad using the theory. Evaluation criteria and further instructions will be handed out and discussed in class.

### **1 final exam – 25%**

An in-class exam will be given near the end of the semester. It will cover all we have covered during the semester.

### **RETAKE POLICY**

Each student has 4 chances to pass any given course distributed in two consecutive academic years (regular period and July period).

Students who do not comply with the 70% attendance rule will lose their 1st and 2nd chance, and go directly to the 3rd one (they will need to enrol again in this course next academic year).

### **Grading for retakes will be subject to the following rules:**

Students failing the course in the first regular period will have to do a retake in July (except those not complying with the attendance rules, which are banned from this possibility).

Dates and location of the July retakes will be posted in advance and will not be changed. Please take this into consideration when planning your summer.

The maximum grade that a student may obtain in any type of retake will be 8 out of 10.

Course-specific procedures for the second evaluation period:

- You will be required to hand in (by the scheduled date of the exam) any and all work on major writing assignments that you have not previously submitted. You must complete all major written assignments in order to pass the course. In the case of written work for which you did not receive a passing grade, you are expected to hand in extensively revised work. Any missing or failed group work will be replaced by a written assignment meeting the same course objectives. In addition, you may be required to sit for an in-person written and/or oral exam to be administered in Segovia on the scheduled day and time of the summer examination.

### **STUDENTS RETAKING THE COURSE** (en la "tercera convocatoria")

The students in their third attempt must do: Two short essays (20% each) and one final exam consisting of an in-class exam and a take-home essay (30% each).

### **PLAGIARISM**

It is your responsibility to follow IE's policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism is, in all cases, a serious academic offence which can result in failing an assignment, failing the course, or even expulsion from the University.

### **GRADING**

Grades will be distributed on the following scale:

10,0—9,0 Sobresaliente (Outstanding)

8,9 – 7,0 Notable (Good)

6,9 – 5,0 Aprobado (Pass)

4,9 – 0 Suspenso (Fail)

## **PROFESSOR BIO**

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## Ruth Palmer, Ph.D.

Ruth Palmer is a full-time Assistant Professor of Communication at IE University, where her current and past courses include Communication Foundations; Public Opinion, Persuasion, and Engagement; Political Communication; Media Relations (in the Master of Corporate Communication); and Negotiation and Public Speaking. She has also taught in the IE-Brown University Summer Program, and co-directed the IE Communications Lab. Dr. Palmer's research explores how people think about and relate to the news media. Her book *Becoming the News: How Ordinary People Respond to the Media Spotlight* (Columbia University Press, 2018) explores how it feels for private citizens to interact with journalists and become the subject of a news story. Her articles have appeared in the academic journals *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, and *Literary Journalism Studies*, as well as in publications aimed at the journalism community and general public, including the *Columbia Journalism Review*, *Nieman Reports*, and *Zócalo Public Square*. She received her PhD in Communication from Columbia University in 2013. Before pursuing her doctorate she earned a B.A. in Comparative Literature from Bryn Mawr College, and worked in the Artistic Administration Department at the Metropolitan Opera.

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### OTHER INFORMATION

#### USE OF LAPTOP IN CLASS

Use of laptops in class is not permitted unless explicit instructions have been given by the professor that they should be used for specific activities. This means you should bring your laptop to class in case we use them for a specific purpose, but all readings must be printed out in advance and brought to class on paper. Use of laptops when not explicitly instructed, or use of cell phones in class, will have a negative effect on students' participation grades.