Texas A&M University
Core Curriculum
Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

Foundational Component Area: Social and Behavioral Sciences

In the box below, describe how this course meets the Foundational Component Area description for Social and Behavioral Sciences. Courses in this category focus on the application of empirical and scientific methods that contribute to the understanding of what makes us human. Courses involve the exploration of behavior and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, and events, examining their impact on the individual, society, and culture.

The proposed course must contain all elements of the Foundational Component Area. How does the proposed course specifically address the Foundational Component Area definition above?

COMM 325-Persuasion Persuasion, at its most basic meaning, is influence. Theorized for millennia and practiced everyday, no one escapes interaction with persuasion. Persuasion is central to almost every moment of the human experience, across all time, all nations and all cultures. This course is designed to provide an overview of important theories and models of persuasion that relate to the design and reception of persuasive messages. Its aim is to instruct students in the techniques and factors that lead to changes in attitudes and behaviors. Through study of persuasive models and theories students not only explore a detailed realm of the human communication process, but also become more critical observers of messages that influence our thoughts, behaviors, and actions. Persuasion examines the role communication plays in the social influence process. This course is organized around several theoretical approaches to the study of attitude change. The course is particularly concerned with identifying the strategies that professional persuaders use when peddling their ideas, products, services, and philosophies.

Core Objectives

Describe how the proposed course develops the required core objectives below by indicating how each learning objective will be addressed, what specific strategies will be used for each objective and how student learning of each objective will be evaluated.

The proposed course is required to contain each element of the Core Objective.

Critical Thinking (to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, and analysis, evaluation and synthesis of information):

A critical key to the study of persuasion is the ability to recognize instances of persuasion, to repel this influence when desired and to employ the principles and theories of persuasion when desired. Therefore, students must analyze and evaluate instances of communication to identify each for intent and to determine the desirability of the attempt to change attitudes, values and beliefs. Persuasion involves intent, coercion, content, plurality, presence and media. Students must interrogate each of these elements and then synthesize the individual and collective impact of each. Creative thinking and innovation come into play as students work to resist persuasion and as they work to counter resistance to persuasion. An example of this is pre-emptive refutation in which inoculation theory is employed to provide counter persuasion prior to the listener receiving a message contrary to the initial message. Regular student presentations on the topic afford additional opportunities for critical thinking as students work together in teams to evaluate and analyze instances of persuasion and to employ innovation and creative thinking to solve problems presented by the persuasive situation. A critical part of learning is the application of persuasion theories and tactics discussed in class. To this end, students present a team presentation in which they connect theories and class content to real-world situations. Teams can accomplish this task via identifying media clips examples, role-playing, employing some other creative
Texas A&M University
Core Curriculum

Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

endeavor, or a combination of techniques. The team reads, discusses and fully synthesizes the relevant class readings, and selects 2-4 examples that are pertinent to the week's theory/topic. Examples can include print advertisement, magazines, pamphlets, video clips, audio clips, TV broadcast or internet web sites. Teams may also use a combination of role playing, media clips, or some other creative endeavor. Each team presents their examples to the class, explains how the examples relate to the week's persuasion theory/concept and answers any questions from the class. A PowerPoint file for the presentation is required to be e-mailed to professor prior to presentation for review. The mastery of critical thinking in the realm of persuasion is assessed by student performance in the team activity and response to standard examination items.

Communication (to include effective development, interpretation and expression of ideas through written, oral and visual communication):

Persuasion is when communication causes someone else to change. Another person is usually the source of that persuasion. In COMM 325-Persuasion, students develop persuasive messages, interpret persuasive messages and explore the range of expression of persuasive message. They examine and produce persuasion in written form, in speech and in visual images. This course clearly employs each of the three aspects of communication (written, oral and visual) to influence ideas at the development level, the interpretation level and the expression level. An example of communication is action is the team project which requires each of these features. (Please see description in previous section.) Communication in the realm of persuasion is assessed by student performance in the team activity in particular and response to standard examination items.

Empirical and Quantitative Skills (to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions):

Empirical skills are employed to manipulate and analyze observable facts from a persuasive perspective. Students analyze and critique persuasive communication employing the tools and methods of collected data introduced in the course. These methods may include experiments, surveys and content analysis. Data is collected through direct observation and through analysis of video interactions, published documents and participant observer accounts. Students draw informed conclusions about the nature of persuasive communication based on analysis and synthesis of the data collected. An example is content analysis of compliance gaining strategies. Students identify a number of compliance gaining strategies, tallying the number of each in a persuasive endeavor. Statistical analysis of the numerical data yields an index by which to evaluate the study. The ability to employ empirical methods to the study of persuasive communication is assessed through student performance in the team activity and response to standard examination items.

Social Responsibility (to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities):

Key in the accurate descriptions, interpretation and evaluation of persuasive communication is the synthesis of knowledge of intercultural norms, including but not limited to genderlects, as well as generational, ethnic, contextual, national and societal considerations. These cultures include, but are not limited to, geographic constructs. In order to use the social science involved in persuasion, students must incorporate contextual factors that aid in decisions regarding the implementation of persuasive
Initial Request for a Course Addition to the Fall 2014 Core Curriculum

strategies. From the ethics based question, “how far should a company go to persuade someone to buy a product” and similarly related “how far should a government go in persuading its citizens to adopt ‘safe’ behavior” to procedurally based questions, “how does a public relations campaign so successful in the U.S translate in, say, China” and similarly “how does one go about persuading people in cultures who hold different values to treat its citizens fairly and humanely,” students must glean intercultural competence coupled with civic responsibility in order to answer these questions. Bolstered with this knowledge and skill, communicators will be prepared to engage in persuasion in communities both similar to and diverse from their own. The ability to exhibit social responsibility in persuasive communication is assessed by student performance in the team activity and response to standard examination items.

Please be aware that instructors should be prepared to submit samples/examples of student work as part of the future course recertification process.