

# Respect, Rhetoric, and the Psychology of Persuasion

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## Course description

This course examines how ethically permissible persuasion can be accomplished, with particular attention to (a) issues of moral respect, (b) the ethics of rhetoric, and (c) relevant work in social sciences. Unlike traditional philosophy seminars, this course will be largely focused on public-facing work. Students will analyze and propose interventions in other people and organization's attempts to persuade.

## Objectives

The primary learning objective for this course is to identify some concrete respects in which they and others can improve as respectful persuaders, in light of the realities of human psychology. The subsidiary learning objectives are to first understand selected key components of (a) theories of rhetoric (ancient and modern) and (b) the Elaboration Likelihood Model and Terror Management Theory, and second to analyze these theories through an ethical lens.

## Assessment

### Optional Discussion-Leading (no official points)

Give a 5-minute "key points" summary, tie it to some non-academic examples, then pose the most important questions you think need to be figured out. Following that, lead a ~45 minute class discussion around your questions.

### Reading Responses (20% of final grade)

At least one hour prior to each class in Weeks 2 - 6, answer the following questions using text-entry on Canvas's *Reading Responses* discussion board:

1. What do you take to be the single most important claim from the readings? (Pick only one claim, even when there are multiple readings.)
2. What do you think is the best alternative view on the topic of the claim in 1?
3. Which do you think is more plausible, the claim in 1 or the alternative in 2? Why?
4. What did you find to be the most confusing sentence in our readings? (Quote it.) Number your answers. Each answer should be no more than three sentences.

No later than 24 hours after class, respond to a classmate's reading response (Canvas will randomly assign you to someone, though you can respond to others as well). In your response:

- Offer a critical (but respectful!) reply to the answer for question 3, and
- Rewrite the quoted sentence for question 4 to make it as clear as possible.

### Analytic Paper (10% + 30% of final grade)

Choose one contemporary reading from Weeks 2 or 3 and write a concise, critical paper in response. Your paper will be in the style of articles in *Analysis* and discussion notes in *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy*.<sup>1</sup> The response can be either an objection to one of the reading's central arguments or a novel solution to one of the problems raised in the reading. It should be no more than 3000 words.

Drafts of the papers are due in Week 4 (graded credit/no credit for 10%), and will receive comments and hypothetical rubric grades by the end of Week 5. Final, revised versions are due at the end of Week 8 (graded with following rubric for 30%).

<b>Introduction effectively introduces topic and thesis statement</b>	<b>2 points</b>
<b>Sections appropriately structure discussion</b>	<b>2 points</b>
<b>Sentences are grammatical, clear, and concise</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>Presentation of critiqued view is accurate</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>Objection/proposed solution is creative</b>	<b>4 points</b>
<b>Objection/proposed solution is successful as written</b>	<b>4 points</b>

<sup>1</sup> For examples, see Stock, "Sexual Objectification" and Hammerton, "Is Agent-Neutral Deontology Possible?"

Optional Extra Paper Revision + Meta-Cognitive Reflection (can recover up to 1/3 of lost points for Analysis-Style Paper)

The standards for the final version of the Analysis-Style Paper will be quite demanding. You therefore have an option of making up a large portion of that grade by writing one additional revision of the paper, to be turned in at the end of the quarter. Alongside the additional revision, include a ~1000 word reflection on what you find most challenging about this style of writing, and how you think you can best address that challenge.

Field Project 1: Contrastive Analysis (Weeks 7 and 8) (20% of final grade)

The first project, which you will complete in pairs (with one team of three if needed), involves identifying one successful and one interestingly-similar but unsuccessful case of persuasion from outside the academy. The project involves the following steps:

- Independently, find 2-3 examples of successful persuasion and 2-3 examples of attempted but unsuccessful persuasion. The examples should be non-academic and non-fictional, but can come from personal life, pop culture, politics, or social media (including memes and gifs).<sup>2</sup> Make your examples as diverse as possible in terms of subject matter, participants, and context. Choose only examples where you have access to enough detail about the event to perform a meaningful analysis.
- In pairs, identify two cases (one drawn from each participant) that make for an illuminating contrast of some sort. One case should be successful, the other unsuccessful.
- Working together, analyze the cases ethically, rhetorically, and psychologically, with a focus on why one attempt was successful and the other was not.
- Upload a written version of your analysis to Canvas at least 24 hours before the presentation, and email it to the rest of the class.
- Present your analysis in seminar for ~10 minutes, then lead a class discussion.

Field Project 2: Proposed Intervention (Weeks 9 and 10) (20% of final grade)

The second project, which you can pursue either individually or in small groups, will propose a respectful intervention in some non-academic situation or debate in which at least one side is failing to persuade. The topic and form of intervention are up to you (some options are listed below), though your choices should be informed by the material covered in the class. You should be clear about who your intended audience is. It will be left up to you whether to actually proceed with the intervention. The proposed intervention should include a meta-level discussion of how to persuade the targets of the proposal to accept its recommendations. You are encouraged (but not required) to build on your earlier work with the *Analysis*-style paper and Field Project 1.

Possible formats for this project include:

- An op-ed (appropriate for submission to, e.g., the *Seattle Times*) about how local officials could improve their messaging around some safety issue.<sup>3</sup>
- A letter to an activist organization (e.g., 350 Seattle) with recommendations about how to improve their fundraising messaging.
- A video (appropriate for YouTube), offering guidance to participants on one side of a debate, e.g., “How to productively argue with Flat Earthers.”

As with Project 1, prepare to present your analysis in seminar (~10 minutes, plus discussion), and upload a written version of the analysis to Canvas and email it to the rest of the class at least 24 hours before the presentation.

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<sup>2</sup> For an easy source of cases, see [ceasefire.net](http://ceasefire.net). However, at most one case for each team can come from this source.

<sup>3</sup> For guidance on writing op-eds as a philosopher, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRN85TOWukM>

## Course schedule

Week 1: Introduction to the course Reading/viewing:

### Pop psychology of persuasion

- Robert Cialdini's 'Principles of Persuasion': <https://www.influenceatwork.com/principles-of-persuasion/>
- Robert Yeung's 'Influence Toolkit': attached **Popular overviews of some relevant studies**
- On 'deep engagement' reducing transphobia: <https://www.vox.com/2016/4/7/11380974/reduce-prejudice-science-transgender>
- On teenage girls reducing climate denial in parents: [https://www.vice.com/en\\_ca/article/mb8bv8/teen-girls-are-the-best-atconvincing-parents-that-climate-change-is-real-study-finds](https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/mb8bv8/teen-girls-are-the-best-atconvincing-parents-that-climate-change-is-real-study-finds)

### Persuaders' testimony

- Interview with 'Sam Bloom' (community health nurse) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=veFfJ46-gSk>
- Interview with 'N' (conservative national security professional), attached.
- Fred Rogers' congressional testimony: <https://www.pbs.org/video/mister-rogers-goes-washington-ycjrnx/>
- Daryl Davis TED talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORp3q1Oaezw>
- Chris Voss TED talk: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MjhDkNmtjy0>

Week 2: Ethics of Respect Reading: • G. Tsai, (2014). "Rational Persuasion as Paternalism", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*. • R. Rini, (2018). "Abortion, Ultrasound, and Moral Persuasion", *Philosophers' Imprint*. ○ Optional: R. McKenna (2020). "Persuasion and Epistemic Paternalism" in *Epistemic Paternalism*.

- H. Breakey (2019). "The Ethics of Arguing", *Inquiry Watch*:
- Interview with R. Rini: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6HegLWKWtIY>

Week 3: Ethics Beyond Respect Reading:

- I. Young, (2001). "Activist Challenges to Deliberative Democracy." *Political Theory*.
- K. Dotson, (2011). "Tracking Epistemic Violence." *Hypatia*.
- C. Sunstein, (2015). "The Ethics of Nudging." *Yale Journal on Regulation*. Watch:
- Interview with I. Maitra: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OCV-jYHF8I>

Week 4: Rhetoric Reading:

- Aristotle (2018). *Rhetoric* (C.D.C Reeve, trans.), selections.
- S. Fish, (2017). *Winning Arguments*.
- R. Rorty, "Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality," *Yale Review* 81.4 (October 1993): 1-20.

Week 5: The Elaboration Likelihood Model

Watch:

- Interview with R. Petty: <https://youtu.be/zkPbFKtVkpg> Reading:
- R. Petty & D. Wegener, (1999). "The Elaboration Likelihood Model: Current Status and Controversies." *Dual Process Theories in Social Psychology*.

Week 6: Sources of resistance to persuasion Reading:

- J. Greenberg, & J. Arndt, (2012). "Terror Management Theory." *Handbook of Social Psychology*.
- C. Korsgaard (1996), *Sources of Normativity*, selections.
- M. Klintman (2019), *Knowledge Resistance*, selections. Watch:
- Interview with J. Greenberg: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgpgJUZYCww>

Weeks 7 and 8: Project 1 Presentations

Weeks 9 and 10: Project 2 Presentations

**Information for Students**  
*University of Washington, Department of Philosophy*

## **POLICIES AND RESOURCES Academic Misconduct**

Academic misconduct, including plagiarism, is prohibited by the [Student Conduct Code for the University of Washington](#) and is taken very seriously by the UW. According to the student conduct code, academic misconduct includes:

1. "Cheating" which includes, but is not limited to:
    - a. The use of unauthorized assistance in taking quizzes, tests, or examinations, or completing assignments;
    - b. The acquisition, use, or distribution of unpublished materials created by another student without the express permission of the original author(s);
    - c. Using online sources, such as solution manuals, without the permission of the instructor to complete assignments, exams, tests, or quizzes; or
    - d. Requesting, hiring, or otherwise encouraging someone to take a course, exam, test, or complete assignments for a student.
  2. "Falsification," which is the intentional use or submission of falsified data, records, or other information including, but not limited to, records of internship or practicum experiences or attendance at any required event(s), or scholarly research.
  3. "Plagiarism," which is the submission or presentation of someone else's words, composition, research, or expressed ideas, whether published or unpublished, without attribution. Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to:
    - a. The use, by paraphrase or direct quotation, of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment; or
    - b. The unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or acquired from an entity engaging in the selling of term papers or other academic materials.
  4. Unauthorized collaboration.
  5. Engaging in behavior specifically prohibited by an instructor in the course of class instruction or in a course syllabus.
  6. Multiple submissions of the same work in separate courses without the express permission of the instructor(s).
  7. Taking deliberate action to destroy or damage another's academic work in order to gain an advantage for oneself or another.
  8. The recording of instructional content without the express permission of the instructor(s), unless approved as a disability accommodation, and/or the dissemination or use of such unauthorized records.
- (Source: [WAC 478-121 - Academic Misconduct](#))

Plagiarism may lead to disciplinary action by the University against the student who submitted the work. Any student who is uncertain whether his or her use of the work of others constitutes plagiarism should consult the course instructor for guidance before formally submitting the course work involved.

## **Incompletes**

Incomplete grades may only be awarded if a student is doing satisfactory work up until the last two weeks of the quarter and has furnished proof satisfactory to the instructor that the work cannot be completed because of illness or other circumstances beyond the student's control. (Sources: [Office of the Registrar – Incomplete Grades](#)), [UW General Catalog, Student Guide – Grading System](#))

## **Grade Appeal Procedure**

A student who believes that the instructor erred in the assignment of a grade, or who believes a grade recoding error or omission has occurred, shall first discuss the matter with the instructor before the end of the following academic quarter (not including Summer Quarter). If the student is not satisfied with the instructor's explanation, the student, no later than ten days after their discussion with the instructor, may submit a written appeal to the chair of the Department of Philosophy with a copy of the appeal also sent to the instructor. The chair consults with the instructor to ensure that the evaluation of the student's performance has not been arbitrary or capricious. Should the chair believe the instructor's conduct to be arbitrary or capricious and the instructor declines to revise the grade, the chair, with the approval of the voting members of his or her faculty, shall appoint an appropriate member, or members, of the faculty of the Department of Philosophy to evaluate the performance of the student and assign a grade. The Dean and Provost should be informed of this action. Once a student submits a written appeal, this document and all subsequent actions on this appeal are recorded in written form for deposit in a School file. (Source: [UW General Catalog, Student Guide – Grading System](#))

## **Concerns About a Course, an Instructor, or a Teaching Assistant**

If you have any concerns about a philosophy course or your instructor, please see the instructor about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the instructor or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the chair of the program offering the course (names available from the Department of Philosophy, 361 Savery Hall).

If you have any concerns about a teaching assistant, please see the teaching assistant about these concerns as soon as possible. If you are not comfortable talking with the teaching assistant or not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the instructor in charge of the course. If you are still not satisfied with the response that you receive, you may contact the chair of the program offering the course (names available from the Department of Philosophy, 361 Savery Hall), or the Graduate School at G-1 Communications Building (5435900).

## **Equal Opportunity**

The University of Washington reaffirms its policy of equal opportunity regardless of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, disability, or status as a disabled veteran or Vietnam-era veteran in accordance with University of Washington policy and applicable federal and state statutes and regulations.

## **Access and Accommodations**

Your experience in this class is important to the instructor. If you have already established accommodations with Disability Resources for Students (DRS), please communicate your approved accommodations to the instructor at your earliest convenience so you can discuss your needs in this course.

If you have not yet established services through DRS, but have a temporary health condition or permanent disability that requires accommodations (conditions include but are not limited to: mental health, attention-related, learning, vision, hearing, physical or health impacts), you are welcome to contact DRS at 206-543-8924 (Voice & Relay) or [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) or [disability.uw.edu](mailto:disability.uw.edu). DRS offers resources and coordinates reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities and/or temporary health conditions. Reasonable accommodations are established through an interactive process between you, your instructor(s) and DRS. It is the policy and practice of the University of Washington to create inclusive and accessible learning environments consistent with federal and state law.

## **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is defined as the use of one's authority or power, either explicitly or implicitly, to coerce another into unwanted sexual relations or to punish another for his or her refusal, or as the creation by a member of the University community of an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or educational environment through verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.

If you believe that you are being harassed, seek help—the earlier the better. You may speak with your instructor, your teaching assistant, the undergraduate advisor (363 Savery Hall), graduate program advisor (366 Savery Hall), or the chair of the philosophy department (364 Savery Hall). In addition, you should be aware that the University has designated special people to help you. For assistance you may contact: [SafeCampus: Office of the Ombud](#) (339 HUB, 206-543-6028); [Title IX Investigation Office](#) (for complaints that a University student has violated the sexual misconduct provisions of the Student Conduct Code); [University Complaint Investigation and Resolution Office](#) (for complaints concerning the behavior of University employees, including faculty, teaching assistants, and other student employees).

## **Integrity**

The Office of Research Misconduct Proceedings (ORMP) coordinates the University's handling of allegations of research misconduct against members of the University community, in consultations and cooperation with the University's schools, colleges, and campuses.

University rules define scientific and scholarly misconduct to include the following forms of inappropriate activity: intentional misrepresentation of credentials; falsification of data; plagiarism; abuse of confidentiality; deliberate violation of regulations applicable to research.

Students can report cases of scientific or scholarly misconduct either to the ORMPP, to their faculty adviser, or the department chair. The student should report such problems to whomever he or she feels most comfortable.

(Sources: [Executive Order No. 61 – Research Misconduct Policy](#); [Office of Research Misconduct Proceedings: minutes of Grad School Executive Staff and Division Heads meeting, 7/23/98.](#))

## **SafeCampus**

Preventing violence is everyone's responsibility. SafeCampus is the University of Washington's Violence Prevention and Response Program. They support students, staff, faculty, and community members in preventing violence.

SafeCampus staff will listen to your concerns and provide support and safety plans tailored to your situation. Caring, trained professionals will talk you through options and connect you with additional resources if you want them.

If you're concerned, tell someone.

- Always call 911 if you or others may be in danger.
- Call 206-685-SAFE (7233) to report non-urgent threats of violence and for referrals to UW counseling and/or safety resources. TTY or VP callers, please call through your preferred relay service.
- Don't walk alone. Campus safety guards can walk with you on campus after dark. Call Husky NightWalk 206-685-WALK (9255).
- Stay connected in an emergency with UW Alert. Register your mobile number to receive instant notification of campus emergencies via text and voice messaging. [Sign up for UW Alert](#) online.
- For more information visit the [SafeCampus website](#).

## **Religious Accommodations**

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#) (<https://registrar.washington.edu/staffandfaculty/religious-accommodationspolicy/>). Accommodations must be requested within the first two weeks of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request form](#) (<https://registrar.washington.edu/students/religious-accommodationsrequest/>).

## **Food Insecurity and Hardship**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and believes this may affect their performance in the course, is urged to contact the UW Any Hungry Husky Program. Any Hungry Husky provides hunger relief free of judgment or stigma. Go to <https://www.washington.edu/anyhungryhusky/> for information about the food pantry and food security grants. In addition, UW offers emergency aid for students experiencing unexpected financial hardships that may disrupt their education or get in the way of completing their degree. Go to <https://www.washington.edu/emergencycuid/> for more information about how to apply.

## **Guidance to Students Taking Courses Outside the U.S.**

Faculty members at U.S. universities – including the University of Washington – have the right to academic freedom which includes presenting and exploring topics and content that other governments may consider to be illegal and, therefore, choose to censor. Examples may include topics and content involving religion, gender and sexuality, human rights, democracy and representative government, and historic events.

If, as a UW student, you are living outside of the United States while taking courses remotely, you are subject to the laws of your local jurisdiction. Local authorities may limit your access to course material and take punitive action towards you. Unfortunately, the University of Washington has no authority over the laws in your jurisdictions or how local authorities enforce those laws.

If you are taking UW courses outside of the United States, you have reason to exercise caution when enrolling in courses that cover topics and issues censored in your jurisdiction. If you have concerns regarding a course or courses that you have registered for, please contact your academic advisor who will assist you in exploring options.

## **Face Coverings and Social Distancing in the Classroom during COVID**

The health and safety of the University of Washington community are the institution's priorities. Until otherwise stated **face coverings are required** per [UW COVID Face Covering Policy](#); indoors where other people are present and outdoors when keeping a 6-foot distance may not be possible. **This includes all classrooms and buildings/public spaces on each of the UW campuses.**

If you physically can't wear a mask, you choose not to wear a mask, your mask isn't appropriate/sufficient, or if you aren't wearing a mask properly (*covering both your nose and mouth-diagram below*), you **CANNOT** be in the classroom and will be asked to leave.

If you have a medical condition or health risk as outlined in the [UW COVID Face Covering Policy](#), you may request an accommodation. Please contact Disability Resources for Students office **BEFORE GOING TO CLASS** at [uwdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwdrs@uw.edu) (Seattle) [drsuwt@uw.edu](mailto:drsuwt@uw.edu) (Tacoma) [uwbdrs@uw.edu](mailto:uwbdrs@uw.edu) (Bothell).

### **A face covering must:**

- Fit snugly against the sides of the face
- Completely cover the nose and mouth
- Be secured with ties, ear loops, elastic bands, or other equally effective method
- Include at least one layer of cloth, although multiple layers are strongly recommended
- Allow for breathing without restriction
- Be capable of being laundered and machine dried without damage or change to shape



[CDC: How to Wear Masks](#)