

# Attitudes and Communication

Tuesdays, 12.45-14.30

**Lecturer:** Dr. Kate A. Ratliff

**Office:** Prisma-810

**Email:** k.a.ratliff@uvt.nl

**Office Phone:** (013) 466-2483

**Office Hours:** By appointment

## Course Description

Understanding people's attitudes is important for explaining and predicting human behavior. This course is designed to provide you with a broad overview of research on attitudes and persuasion. We will examine the attitude construct, the origins of attitudes, implicit attitudes, and the role of persuasive communication in attitude change. You will also learn how theories are tested and applied and will learn to critically evaluate the merits and limitations of scientific research.

## Course Goals

1. Students will gain a thorough understanding of existing research in the area of attitudes and persuasion.
2. Students will think critically about experimental methodology for studying attitudes and will gain an understanding of the type of methodologies that attitudes researchers use.
3. Students will gain an understanding of the current debates and unanswered questions in attitudes and persuasion research.
4. Students will examine how basic attitudes research can help explain and address social issues in society and in personal lives.

## Course Structure

Class meetings will typically consist of 45 minutes of lecture, a 15-minute break, and either 45 more minutes of lecture or a small group activity.

## Course Assignments

To pass the course, your overall grade must be at least 6 points.

*Early term paper and late term paper (each 15% of your final grade).* You will write two 2-3 page papers applying the theories that we have learned in class to a real life situation or problem. Specific information about the paper topics will be provided during lecture. You will hand in your paper at the beginning of the class meeting on the day that it is due (not by email). Absolutely no late papers will be accepted except in the case of a documented emergency and you will have only one chance to write each paper (i.e., there is no re-writing). Your paper grades will be posted on Blackboard within two weeks of the due date.

*Early term exam and late term exam (each 20% of your final grade) and final exam (30% of your final grade).* Exams consist of a mixture of multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and open-ended questions. The exams will cover material from the book and class lectures. Absolutely no make-up exams will be given except in the case of a documented emergency and you will have only one chance to take the early and late term exams (i.e., there is no re-sit). You will have two chances to take the final exam. Please note that the re-sit of the final exam is worth 30% of your final grade and does not replace the entire grade; your other assignment grades still count toward the total.

### **Passing the Course**

In order to pass the course your average grade must be at least a 6. If you do not pass the course you must repeat it, including all written assignments and exams.

### **Course Materials**

The primary text for this course is *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* by Richard Perloff. (referred to as Perloff on the course schedule). Each week you will be assigned one or two chapters from the book to read. The slides that I use in class lectures will be available to you on Blackboard at least 24 hours before the class meeting. Please note that, because of copyright restrictions, some graphics that are presented in class will not be presented on your version of the slides; these will be noted.

### **Course Attendance and Preparation**

You should read the assigned chapter and any additional readings before coming to class. Lectures will always include information that is not in the assigned text, so it is in your best interest to attend class regularly.

### **Important Dates**

*Early Term Exam:* September 27<sup>th</sup>

*Early Term Paper:* October 18<sup>th</sup>

*Late Term Exam:* November 15<sup>th</sup>

*Late Term Paper:* December 6<sup>th</sup>

*Final Exam:* TBA

## Course Schedule

<b>Week</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Activities</b>	<b>Reading</b>
1	08/30	Introduction to Attitudes and Persuasion	Perloff Chapter 1
2	09/06	Attitudes: Definition and Structure	Perloff Chapter 2
3	09/13	Attitudes: Functions and Consequences	Perloff Chapter 3
4	09/20	Measuring Attitudes	Perloff Chapter 4
5	09/27	Early-Term Exam	No Reading
6	10/04	Implicit Attitudes	On Blackboard
7	10/11	No Class – I'm Attending a Conference	No Reading
8	10/18	Persuasive Communications I; Early-Term Paper Due	Perloff Chapter 5
9	10/25	No Class – University Holiday	No Reading
10	11/01	Persuasive Communications II	Perloff Chapter 5 & 6
11	11/08	Source and Message Factors in Persuasion	Perloff Chapter 6 & 7
12	11/15	Late-Term Exam	No Reading
13	11/22	Cognitive Dissonance and Consistency	Perloff Chapter 9
14	11/29	Personality and Interpersonal Persuasion	Perloff Chapters 8 & 10
15	12/06	Persuasion in Society; Late-Term Paper Due	Perloff Chapters 11 & 12