PRK 3508 Persuasion and Influence in Society

Programme
Bachelor of PR and Market Communication (2. year)

Responsible for the course
Christian Fieseler

Department
Department of Communication and Culture

Term
According to study plan

ECTS Credits
7,5

Language of instruction
Norwegian and english

Introduction

Building on previous exposure in consumer theory, students will learn how to craft persuasive message aimed at the wider stakeholder arena. The course is first and foremost theory-based, in that students will get an in-depth knowledge into theories of social psychology and cognition, as well as audience information processing and decision-making. We will adapt these theoretical underpinnings to the communications of stakeholders such as political and social organizations and movements, as well as activists and non-governmental organizations, to both better understand their sense-making and adequate forms of addressing them. The course is thus intended to extend student's prior knowledge in consumer behavior, to both expose them to further theoretical depth as well as to show and discuss further, stakeholder-oriented applications of these theories.

Learning outcome

Acquired Knowledge

- Students will obtain an understanding for the role of theory in persuading stakeholders, and will get acquainted with up-to-date research and methodology to plan and frame political and social communication strategies.
- Participants will learn both theories of social psychology as well as of stakeholder perception and decision-making, ranging from both classical theoretical insights to ways of engaging audiences with modern means such as storytelling and new media.
- To this end, strong emphasis will be laid on methodological concerns and a fundamental understanding for the nature of human cognition and group decision-making – combined with the discussion of engagement strategies and campaign elements.
- On completing the course, students should be able to understand the main concepts and models of influence and persuasion, as well as the sometimes unconscious processes underlying persuasion. Additionally, they should understand the ethical dilemmas of persuasion.

Acquired Skills

- On completing the course, students should be able to apply small and mass media persuasion techniques to their communication strategies and be able to add value in public affairs roles

Reflection
On completing the course, students should understand the objectives of persuasion, and be able to raise critical

Prerequisites
None.

Compulsory reading
Books:
Gass, Robert H., John S. Seiter. 2014. Persuasion : social influence and compliance gaining. 5th ed, International ed. Pearson
Nodder, C. 2013. Evil by Design: Interaction Design to Lead Us into Temptation. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley

Collection of articles:
Fieseler, Christian. 2016. Persuasion and Influence in Society. Handelshøyskolen BI

Recommended reading

Course outline
1. **Introduction**
    Introduction into persuasion and the course, as well as communalities to the practice of consumer behavior. A definition of persuasive communication as well as several examples of persuasion, which will all be elaborated upon in more detail in the upcoming lectures, will be provided.

1. **Information Processing**
   Essentials of human perception, bounded rationality and mental models. Discussion how schemata and heuristics are used to process information, and the link to what this means to political and social persuasion.

1. **Attitudes**
   Why attitudes help explain social decision-making, and their embeddedness in associations. Means of measuring attitudes and opinions, and thoughts on the consistency of attitudes and the desire to achieve cognitive balance.

1. **Models of Behavior**
   Theories of decision-making, ranging from the Theory of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior to the Elaboration –Likelihood Model and other approaches to explain how stakeholders examine persuasive messages.

1. **Conformity and Influence in Groups**
   On the difference between coercion and persuasion, group dynamics that lead to often-unintended decision making processes, and how group pressure might force people into action.

1. **Source Factors**
   How the social attractiveness of a persuader influences message effectiveness, how to put communicator characteristics to use and how to use endorsements to persuade.

1. **Audience Factors**
   How, depending on who listens to a message, the persuasive effect might be different (depending on variables such as need for cognition, self-monitoring, etc.). Ways of conceptualizing stakeholder audiences and identifying pathways for engagement.

1. **Message Factors**
   Choosing the contents of a persuasive message, especially with regards to the use of language in persuasion and order effects to make arguments the most persuasive.

1. **Interpersonal Influence**
   Discussion of a collection of techniques that are used in dyadic encounters to persuade better and to gain influence – also in regards to campaigning strategies.

1. *Nonverbal Persuasion*
   How body-language, visuals, music, architecture and other techniques are used to influence audiences in politics.

1. **Political Storytelling**
   On the essentials of storytelling research and on the role and construction of political grand narratives and storytelling to motivate followers.

1. **Political and Social Campaigning**
   Application of the theoretical insights to campaign strategies, and technique such as agenda-setting and cutting in political communication.

1. **Persuasion in Social Movements**
   Social movements and their instrumental role to shift political and social agendas, on how to lead social activism and solve social conflicts through dialogue and persuasion.

Computer-based tools
Internet access.

Learning process and workload

The course is implemented as classroom teaching, as well as weekly online tests.

Recommended use of hours:

Activity	Hours
Attending lectures	36
Preparation for lectures	65
Self study / reading of curriculum / preparations for exams	95
Examination	4
Total recommended use of hours	**200**

Use of hours
Lectures: 36 hours, and 9 hours consulting (based on these assessments, they may come for consulting if they see that they run into problems.).

Examination
A 4-hour individual written examination.

Examination code(s)
PRK 35081 - Written examination, accounts for 100 % of the final grade in PRK 3805 Influence and persuasion , 7,5 credits.

Examination support materials
None.

Re-sit examination
Re-sit examination is offered every term.

Additional information