

Course: DMED 540: **Digital Persuasion & Behaviour Change** – 3 credits
Term: Summer 2020, Online, including many Thursdays mornings 9-noon May 14 – Aug 6
Instructor: Robyn Sussel
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Course Goal

Every effective digital product uses theories and practices of persuasion. Games, health apps, mixed reality training scenarios, e-commerce sites — whatever the digital product — all need to keep users engaged, lead them towards a goal, encourage them to make a behaviour change, or nudge them along a path. These products also need to measure, track and evaluate their own effectiveness. By exploring concepts from psychology and behavioural economics, we will seek to understand how these disciplines currently influence or could influence digital products and how we can apply them to the production of our own work. We will also explore the ethics of these practices and where this field may be heading in the future.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course students will be able to:

1. understand basic psychological concepts used in persuasion and user behaviour
2. understand and evaluate common digital industry trends including positive uses of persuasion and more problematic uses
3. learn how to analyze and evaluate digital products for how successfully they are likely to persuade users and change behaviours
4. learn how to apply basic psychological concepts to creative campaigns and digital media products in order to influence behaviour

Course Topics

Drawn from psychology & behavioural economics

- Psychological principles underlying digital persuasion
- Designing for persuasion, persuasive writing
- Understanding & controlling user attention
- Principles of nudging users for behavior change
- Ethics of persuasion

Format of the course:

The course uses a seminar-based approach in an online format. We will use a combination of online discussions, online debates, asynchronous chats, online presentations, as well as group and independent projects. We will stay nimble and adapt this format via ongoing feedback from students.

Required Readings:

Thinking, Fast and Slow

By Daniel Kahneman

Nudge

Improving Decisions about health wellness and happiness

By Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein

Persuasive Technology

Using Computers to Change What We Think and Do

B.J. Fogg

Plus articles as assigned.

Course Assignments:

Assignment	Due Date	Weight
Participation & Attendance: Contribution to online class discussion, participation in online group discussions and activities	Throughout term	20%
Self Reflections (2)	June 25 and July 30	15%
Assignments and presentations	Weekly or biweekly	30%
Final Project	Part 1: June 14 Part 2: July 23 & 30 (online presentations) Documentation, written defense: August 3 rd	Part 1, Outline / pitch 10% Part 2, Final assignment including documentation, 2-page written defense & presentation to class 25%

Assignments in Detail

1. Class Attendance and Participation (15%)

Participation includes preparation for each class and participation in various forms of discussion. This involves reading, writing and speaking, and participating in activities and completing assignments by their due dates. Student contributes with insightful and constructive comments to weekly class discussions and activities, and listens attentively when others present materials and perspectives.

2. Assignments and online discussion (30%)

Following the introduction of main concepts through readings and online discussion, students will have 1-2 weeks to undertake smaller assignments that demonstrate their understanding of the concept and how it could be applied. These assignments will take the form of short written assignments, wireframes, storyboards, or summaries to present in-class. Also, students will be evaluated on their contributions to weekly or biweekly online forum discussions.

3. Term Assignment (35%)

The final term assignment will be a project of the student's choosing that uses one or more of the persuasion concepts that we learn in class. Mid-way through the term Ideas for the projects or production will be presented in-class (online) and feedback offered by instructor and the class. Students then work on their products or productions that may take the form of a prototype or MVP. Assignment includes online class presentation and 1000 word explanation of the persuasion principles employed and why you chose this project.

Course Schedule

Class	Topic
Week 1	Course overview and Intro to System 1 and 2 (Kahneman)
Week 2	Brief history and psychological principles underlying persuasion
Week 3	Principles of nudging users for behaviour change
Week 4	Digital persuasion and nudging
Week 5	Understanding bias & controlling user attention
Week 6	Designing for persuasion
Week 7	Midterm: Term project pitches and class feedback
Week 8	Psychology of gamification
Week 9	Persuasive writing for digital products
Week 10	Ethics of digital persuasion
Week 11	Final presentations
Week 12	Final presentations
Week 13	Summary of learnings / virtual picnic

Due dates: Assignments granted an extension beyond the due date will have no extended comments; assignments handed in late without prior permission will be returned with a grade only, no comments, and 2% per day late, including weekends (i.e., 4% for Saturday and Sunday), deducted from the grade assigned to your paper. Assignments submitted after the assignment has been returned to the rest of the class will not normally be accepted.

Attendance:

Regular attendance for online discussions and presentations is expected of all students. Students who are unavoidably absent due to illness or disability should notify to their instructors of their situation.

Evaluation:

In-Class and Online Participation	20
Self-reflections	15
Assignments	30
Final Project	35
Total	100

Written & Spoken English Requirement:

Written and spoken work may receive a lower mark if it is, in the opinion of the instructor, deficient in English.

Religious Accommodation:

The university accommodates students whose religious obligations conflict with attendance, submitting assignments, or completing scheduled tests and examinations. Please let your instructor know in advance, preferably the first week of class, if you will require any accommodations on these grounds.

Academic Integrity

MDM considers plagiarism to be the most serious academic offense that a student can commit. Regardless of whether or not it was committed intentionally, plagiarism has serious academic consequences and can result in expulsion from the university. Plagiarism involves the improper use of somebody else's words or idea's in one's own work.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure you fully understand what plagiarism is. Please see the SFU website for an explanation of the various types of plagiarism and to take the plagiarism tutorial: <http://www.lib.sfu.ca/help/writing/plagiarism>

Grading Profile

A+	95-100
A	90-94
A-	85-89
B+	80-84
B	75-79
B-	70-74
C+	65-69
C	60-64
F	0 - 59

Policies

The student and academic policies of the Masters of Digital Media Program and of Simon Fraser University apply within this course.

Relevant SFU policies can be found at:

- Graduate General Regulations
http://students.sfu.ca/calendar/for_students/grad_regulation.html
- Academic Honesty and Student Conduct Policies
<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/Students/index.html>
- Teaching and Instruction Policies
<http://www.sfu.ca/policies/teaching/index.htm>
- University Policies (complete site)
<http://www.sfu.ca/policies>