



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS
MOUNT ST. JOSEPH UNIVERSITY

PSY 635-S5: Social Influence S1-21
Mount St. Joseph University School of Business

Course Number: PSY 635-S5

Level: Graduate; Required

Credit Hours: 3 Credit Hours

Course Meets: Saturdays 9/5, 9/26, 10/17, 11/7, 12/5/2020
1:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Due to COVID-19, this course meets in the In*Sync format.

Zoom Meeting ID: 854 4790 4816; Passcode: 4816

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85447904816?pwd=T0NNbytHQy85cklpR2F6UkZ0Z3ZkUT09>

Dial-In (Audio Only): (646)558-8656

Note: You must create a Zoom account using your MSJ email and register to join the class meeting.

Instructor Name: Melissa “Missy” Houlette, PhD

Office Location: SE 507, 5th Floor Seton

Office Hours: I will be available after class on Zoom. Additional video meetings or phone meetings are available by appointment.

Telephone: (859) 653-7117 (cell)

E-mail address: missy.houlette@msj.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an in-depth look at how people influence each other's attitudes and behavior, with an emphasis on management applications. A variety of influence methods will be examined.

Course Requisite: Only Master of Science in Organizational Leadership (MSOL) graduate students may register.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES (CLOs)

1. Understand the major principles of social influence;
2. Relate these principles to management/leadership situations and to your everyday life;
3. Have a basic understanding of some of the scientific research that has contributed to our understanding of social influence.



**PSY 635-S5: Social Influence S1-21
Preassignment**

****Due on Blackboard prior to the first class meeting at 1:00 p.m. on September 5, 2020****

The preassignment consists of the following:

1. Reading

Read all of Cialdini, R. (2007). *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion (Revised Edition)*. Needham Heights, MA: Harper Collins Publishers. Note that there is no physical “deliverable” for this part. It is simply the required reading component. However, students are expected to be prepared to participate in a class discussion on during the first class meeting. It would therefore be a good idea to take some notes as you read to refer back to during class.

2. Writing Preparation

Before writing your paper, carefully read the following brief document. This source will help you better understand some of the explications and standards of graduate-level writing and how it differs from the undergraduate level. (Note: The MSJ Writing Center will work with you on any of your assignments.)

<https://sites.google.com/site/gritmockup/writing-and-research/characteristics-of-graduate-level-writing-revised>

3. Field Experience

This exercise requires students to set themselves up as targets of an amateur or professional salesperson or other persuasion expert. Students will (a) identify a situation in which they will encounter a persuasion attempt, (b) obtain instructor approval if the situation is not on the pre-approved situations list, (c) expose themselves to the situation, and (d) write an analytical reflection paper on the experience. Students should behave as naturally as they can in the chosen situation. The “deliverable” for this experience is contained in the paper described below.

Approved Situations:

- Salesperson-heavy retail stores (e.g., stores that sell appliances, jewelry, furniture, high-end clothing), kiosks, and street vendors
- Car dealerships (looking only—no test drives unless you actually intend to purchase a vehicle)
- In-home or online product parties hosted by a friend or acquaintance (e.g., beauty products, nutritional supplements, cooking supplies, clothing, scrapbooking supplies, food products, etc.)
- Service providers (e.g., cell phone, cable, cleaning services, travel agency, gyms)
- Political campaigns/rallies attempting to gain support for a given candidate and/or voter registration campaigns
- Participation in community-based online or in-person discussions or campaigns (i.e., discussions involving more than just a few people) regarding initiating or changing policies



or decisions that affect a large group of people (e.g., being required to wear masks in public places; having children physically return to the classroom in your district or state; access to dine-in restaurants, movies, community pools; mail-in voting; etc.)

NOTE: 1.) Students may leave the situation at any time and should provide personal/identifying information at their own discretion. 2.) Students should avoid situations in which conducting this activity would be of ethical concern or potentially disrupt business (e.g., inquiring about funeral arrangements at a business you do not intend to ever use, visiting a military recruiter feigning interest, arguing with a persuader simply to give that person a hard time). 3.) Students should avoid subjecting themselves to dangerous situations and persuasion attempts from cults and militant organizations for this assignment!

COVID-19 SPECIFICS: 1.) The situation you choose does not have to occur physically “in person”. It could be an online experience such as a friend trying to persuade you to buy something or support a cause on Facebook. For example, in the last week alone, I have been invited by friends to: attend more than one Pampered Chef “party”, buy Mary Kay products (with supporting posts and videos to show me why I would want such things), join a FreeRice Challenge team, purchase custom-made candle creations, and become part of the Suburban Housewives for Biden group (even though I’m single...and live in a condo). 2.) If you do choose an “in person” situation, please be sure to follow all guidelines of the business you visit and the state in which the business is located.

Activity Source: Levine, R. V., Fast, N., & Zimbardo, P. (2004). The power of persuasion: A field exercise. *Teaching of Psychology*, 31(2), 136-138.

4. Paper

Part I: Field Experience Analytical Reflection

After completing the field experience, students will write a paper in which they (a) use the social psychological concepts discussed in the preassignment reading to describe and analyze the tactics that were employed (and their effectiveness and/or the proficiency—or lack thereof—with which they were used), (b) reflect on how they responded to the tactics, and (c) explain how they actively resisted the attempt and/or could more effectively resist similar persuasion attempts in the future. Students will be asked to share their experiences during the first class meeting.

Part II: Items for Class Discussion

Write at least three questions/prompts related to the readings designed to stimulate class discussion. Questions/prompts should reflect that you read and understood the material in the assignment and must be designed to stimulate discussion among the other class members. Refer to the qualities of good discussion questions provided in the Discussion Leadership component in the Performance Evaluation section of this document.

NOTE: Students are not required to answer their own questions in writing. However, they should consider their own response prior to posing it to the class.