GLOBAL SUMMER PROGRAMME 2026

COMM302   DESIGNING COMMUNICATION FOR BEHAVIORAL CHANGE

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What makes people notice certain messages (commercials or news) and not others? How can a campaign for cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes be catchy, convincing, and contagious? When addressing such questions in organizational settings, communications managers often rely on what they know from executive experience and/or conventional wisdom, executing a number of communication strategies aiming at having a desired impact.

This course will show how strategies that may hold intuitive appeal can be challenged and better informed by psychological principles underlying human judgment and decision-making. Students will learn the key psychological principles about how people process information in a given context and how to assess the conditions under which intended and/or unintended consequences arise. The learning, in turn, can be transformed to exert a competitive edge by identifying contributing and constraining factors of strategic communication to make an impact.

Importantly, this module will explore how judgment and decision-making processes exhibit both similarities and differences across cultures, and how to leverage these similarities and differences to develop more impactful behavioral strategies within the Asian context.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Have an understanding of the psychological principles involved in judgment and decision-making of individuals

- Assess how psychological processes might lead to competitive advantages of certain communication campaign for cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes

- Create potentially impactful behavioral strategies (catchy, convincing, and contagious) by applying the principles of human judgment and decision-making that you have learned.

PRE-REQUISITES / REQUIREMENTS / MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE COURSE(S)

There are no prerequisites for this course.

ASSESSMENT METHODS

Class Participation	: 20%
Discussion Leading as a Team	: 20%
Quiz (3 quizzes, 10% each)	: 30%
Term paper	: 30%
TOTAL	: 100%

- *Participation*: There will be 10 sections in which students may participate (excluding first and last lessons). In terms of evaluation, those students participating in class discussion will receive 1 credit. If they stand out, they will be awarded 1 additional credit.

- *Discussion Leading as a Team*: Each lesson, four or five students will be assigned the role of discussion leaders. The discussion leaders' task is to present real-world cases where the findings of behavioral sciences from the assigned readings are either (1) replicated or (2) refuted. Leaders are strongly encouraged to meet outside of class to plan and prepare for leading the discussion. Feel free to include any audio/visual materials (e.g., PowerPoint slides, YouTube videos) that you believe will enhance the discussion or deepen everyone's understanding of the material. Each student will lead the discussion once during the course. Importantly, the application of behavioral science principles should be discussed in the context of Asian settings.

- *Quizzes:* There will be 3 quizzes during the semester. These will be announced quizzes based on the prior meeting's lecture and reading materials. Quizzes will contain ten multiple-choice questions.

- *Term paper:* This assignment is designed to give students practical experience as choice architects, who engineer the preferences, behaviors, choices, and decisions of target decision-makers (e.g., users, consumers, customers, employees, investors). Students are asked to create behavioral strategies that are catchy, convincing, and contagious, tailored to the design of a product, service, or behavioral/attitudinal change of their choice. The target should be something you are passionate about, but it must be situated within the context of the Asian market and society. Students will submit this term paper project in the format of Power Point slides designed however they see fit. That being said, the instructor will provide a basic template. The goal of this term paper is to give students practice with—to test your mastery knowledge of—the course material. The evaluation will be based on the match between the content and the provided rationale. Details of the term paper will be discussed further during the first meeting.

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS AND EXPECTATIONS

The sessions will consist of an instruction component and a variety of other learning activities including short lectures and case discussions. This course is designed for two layers of knowledge gain: theories and applications. First, you will learn each week about the psychological principles behind media content and technology use. Second, you will have a chance to discuss real world cases related to learned principles relevant to ten section themes. The instructor will lead the first part. Students are expected to lead the second part (active learning). To do so, the instructor will give a lecture during the first half of a section. Then, a group of students as a team will lead the discussion as outlined above in the Details of Assessment Methods.

CONSULTATIONS

Students may schedule consultations with the instructor. Standing weekly office hours will be announced during the first session of the course. There will also be consultations for each group of discussion leaders, as well as individual consultations for term papers.

RECOMMENDED TEXT AND READINGS

There will be assigned readings, including book chapters and scientific journal articles, to aid and enhance your understanding of the course content. All readings will be accessible through eLearn and the SMU library webpage.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Academic Integrity
All acts of academic dishonesty (including, but not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, facilitation of acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized possession of exam questions, or tampering with the academic work of other students) are serious offences.

All work (whether oral or written) submitted for purposes of assessment must be the student's own work. Penalties for violation of the policy range from zero marks for the component assessment to expulsion, depending on the nature of the offense.

When in doubt, students should consult the instructors of the course. Details on the SMU Code of Academic Integrity may be accessed at https://smu.sharepoint.com/sites/oasis/SitePages/DOS-WKLSWC/UCSC.aspx.

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LESSON PLAN		
LESSONS	**TOPICS**	**REMARKS**
LESSON 1	<ins>Introduction to the Course</ins> This section will firstly introduce the important logistics of the course (e.g., introduction to course team and norms, assessment methods, and office hours). Then, we will set the perimeters of the discussion by defining what we mean by the psychology of strategic communication in this course within the context of the following subjects: • Preview of the course content • How to make a confident claim that X leads to Y (understanding randomized experiments: a.k.a. A/B test) Reading: Kohavi, R., & Thomke, S. (2017). The surprising power of online experiments. *Harvard Business Review*, *95*(5), 74-82. Available at http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/ehost/detail/detail?vid=5&sid=b7cfa1d8-e7b3-4e7b-9c54-bae2784df18f%40sessionmgr4009&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=124769788&db=bth	
LESSON 2	<ins>Goal Setting:</ins> <ins>How are People Motivated?</ins> Reading: Nodder, C. (2013). *Evil by design: Interaction design to lead us into temptation* (Greed. *pp. 234—285*). Indianapolis, IN: Wiley. Available at eLearn Berger, J., & Pope, D. G. (2011). Can losing lead to winning? *Management Science*, *57*, 817–827. Available at https://www-jstor-org.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/stable/pdf/25835742	
LESSON 3	<ins>Seeing What You Want to See:</ins> <ins>When is Believing Seeing?</ins> Reading: Ariely, D. (2008). Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions (Chapter 9. The Effect of Expectations). New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers. Available at eLearn Balcetis, E., & Dunning, D. (2010). Wishful seeing: More desired objects are seen as closer. *Psychological Science, 21*(1), 147-152. doi:10.1177/0956797609356283 Available at http://pss.sagepub.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/content/21/1/147	

LESSON 4	The Same But Different: How Does Framing Shape Our Decisions? Reading: Kahneman, D. (2013). Thinking, fast and slow. New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. (Chapter 26, Chapter 27, Chapter 34). Available at eLearn Kern, M. C., & Chugh, D. (2009). Bounded ethicality: The perils of loss framing. *Psychological Science, 20*(3), 378-384. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2009.02296.x. Available at http://pss.sagepub.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/content/20/3/378.full.pdf+html	Discussion Leading Group 1
LESSON 5	The Meaning of Money: Why People are Satisfied/Dissatisfied with Transactions? Reading: Thaler, R. H., & Sunstein, C. R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. (Chapter 2: Resisting Temptation). Yale University Press, CT. Shafir, E., & Thaler, R. H. (2006). Invest now, drink later, spend never: On the mental accounting of delayed consumption. *Journal of Economic Psychology*, *27*(5), 694–712.	# Quiz 1 Discussion Leading Group 2
LESSON 6	Chain Reaction of Thoughts and Actions: How Does Labelling Shape Our Judgments (and Choices)? Reading: Alter, A. (2014). *Drunk tank pink: And other unexpected forces that shape how we think, feel, and behave*. London, UK: Penguin Books. (Chapter 2: Labels). Available at eLearn Schuldt, J. P., & Roh, S. (2014). Of accessibility and applicability: How heat-related cues affect belief in "global warming" versus "climate change" *Social Cognition, 32*(3), 219-240. Available at http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/docview/1527413725?OpenUrlRefId=info:xri/sid:primo&accountid=28662	Discussion Leading Group 3
LESSON 7	Beyond Factual Stories: When & Why can Narrative (Storytelling) Ad Campaigns be Successful? Reading: Aaker, J., Smith, A., & Adler, C. (2010). *The dragonfly effect: Quick, effective, and powerful ways to social media to drive social change* (Wing 3: Engage). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass. Available at eLearn	Discussion Leading Group 4

	Escalas, J. E. (2007). Self-referencing and persuasion: Narrative transportation versus analytical elaboration. *Journal of Consumer Research, 33*(4), 421-429. Available at http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/stable/10.1086/510216?sid=primo &origin=crossref#fndtn-full_text_tab_contents	
LESSON 8	Beyond Content of Information: How Ease with which Information is Processed; and Why It Matters? Reading: Petrova, P, Schwarz, N., & Song, H. (2012). Fluency and social influence. In Kenrick, D. T., Goldstein, N. J., & Braver, S. L. (Eds.), *Six Degrees of Social Influence (pp. 39—48)*. Lee, A. Y., & Aaker, J. L. (2004). Bringing the frame into focus: The influence of regulatory fit on processing fluency and persuasion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *86*(2), 205–218. Available at https://web-p-ebscohost-com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=56f876db-aa0a-44c3-a065-737db94ea0c7%40redis	Company Visit: Behavioral Insights in the Wild [TBD]
LESSON 9	Herding the Crowd: When & Why Do Normative Appeals Work? Reading: Ariely, D. (2008). Predictably irrational: The hidden forces that shape our decisions (Chapter 4. The Cost of Social Norms). New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers. Available at eLearn. Schultz, W. P., Nolan, J. M., Cialdini, R. B., Goldstein, N. J., & Griskevicius, V. (2007). The constructive, destructive, and reconstructive power of social norms. *Psychological Science, 18*(5), 429-434. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01917.x. Available at *http://pss.sagepub.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/content/18/5/429.full.pdf+html*	# Quiz 2 Discussion Leading Group 5
LESSON 10	Visuals: How Do Colors Color Consumers' Judgments and Behaviors? Reading: Alter, A. (2014). *Drunk tank pink: And other unexpected forces that shape how we think, feel, and behave*. New York, NY: Penguin Books. (Chapter 7: Colors). Available at eLearn Labrecque, L. I., & Milne, G. R. (2011). Exciting red and competent blue: The importance of color in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 40*(5), 711-727. doi:10.1007/s11747-010-0245-y. Available at eLearn http://link.springer.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/article/10.1007/s11747-	Guest Lecture on Behavioral Insights in Action [TBD]

	010-0245-y # The discussion leaders (==Group 6==) assigned to the topic *Visuals (Colors)* will be leading the discussion during our final session (Lesson 12).	
LESSON 11	<u>The Clash of Cultures:</u> <u>How Does Culture Influence Judgments and Choices?</u> Reading: Nisbett, R. (2004). The geography of thought: How Asians and Westerners think differently and why. (Chapter 5. "The Bad Seed" or "The Other Boys Made Him Do It?": Causal Attribution and Causal Modeling East and West). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster. Available at eLearn. Lee, F. L. F. (2006). Cultural discount and cross-culture predictability: Examining the box office performance of American movies in Hong Kong. *Journal of Media Economics, 19*(4), 259-278. doi: 10.1207/S15327736me1904_3. Available at: http://search.ebscohost.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/login.aspx?direct=true&db=bth&AN=22458008 &site=ehost-live&scope=site	Discussion Leading Group 7
LESSON 12	<u>Summary of the Course: Reviewing Answers to the 10 Questions</u> Reading: Beshears, J., & Gino, F. (2015). Leaders as decision architects. *Harvard Business Review, 93*(5), 51-62. Available at http://web.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.smu.edu.sg/ehost/detail/detail?vid=1&sid=02ba84f4-d9d0-4cd1-a79a-ec1e72751be7%40sessionmgr4007&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWhvc3QtbGl2ZSZzY29wZT1zaXRl#AN=102262149&db=bth # The discussion leaders assigned to the topic *Visuals (Colors)* will be leading the discussion during our final session (Lesson 12).	# Quiz 3 Discussion Leading ==Group 6==