

15.721 Communication and Persuasion through Data For Executives Syllabus

Course Overview

Communication and Persuasion through Data For Executives focuses on strategies and tactics required to use data to move others to (the correct) action. This class will sharpen verbal, written, and visual communication skills via practice and real-world examples. The class is an excellent choice for students who frequently communicate with non-experts inside and outside of their organization.

This course also satisfies the communications requirement for the Certificate in Business Analytics.

Course Objectives

This course teaches how to better convey quantitative information to non-experts inside and outside of your organization. You can expect to both improve your skill set and learn a set of tools that you can use to teach others on your team to be more effective.

The key theme of the class is to build communications that **minimize the cognitive load on your audience**, and focus all the audience attention on the critical information they must know. By the end of this class you will be able to increase your impact by

- Designing graphs and slides that minimize cognitive load
- Presenting data with a framework that minimizes load
- Structuring your ideas to minimize cognitive load

Course Grading

This class is graded on P/D/F basis. We will evaluate all of your assignments and in class presentations in order to provide you feedback, but your final grade for the class will be determined as follows

Students who do the following will receive a **passing** grade

- Attend the entire class
- Turn in all assignments on time
- Complete the assignments according to the assignment requirements and show credible evidence of effort

Students will receive a **D** if they do any of the following

- Miss up to 25% of the class (one half day)
- Fail to turn in the pre-class & in-class assignments on time
- Turn the post-class assignments **up to three days late** without prior notice
- Fail to demonstrate credible evidence of effort on one assignment or fail to meet the assignment requirements

Students will **fail** the class if they

- Miss more than 25% of the class (more than one half day)
- Fail to turn in the post-class assignments within three days of the deadline without prior notice.
- Fail to demonstrate credible evidence of effort on more than one assignment or fail to meet the assignment requirements

We will be generous with extensions on deadlines to students who request them **before the assignment is due**.

Credible evidence of effort is subjective measure, but not a challenging standard to meet. Here are the two tests we usually apply:

- Does the assignment show evidence you have read the assignment and are completing what the assignment asks you to do?
- If the assignment is to edit or improve something developed in class, does your work show evidence you have made meaningful edits that incorporate learnings from the class. The standard for meaningful edits depend on your original submission, but in no case will an unchanged original meet the standard of credible evidence of effort.

Assignments

Assignment	Due Date
1. Complete the pre-class preparation 1. Read the two readings 2. Bring up to 2 slides to present 3. Draft an argument in the form of a Minto Pyramid	Pre-Readings by Day 1 of class Draft Slides & Pyramid by 1 pm on Day 1 of class
2. Attend and participate in class	Ongoing
3. <u>Redraw a slide & Present the redrawn slide</u>	Day 2 of Class
4. <u>Synthesize your learnings from revising and presenting your slides</u>	11:59 pm, Sunday January 18
5. <u>Revise your Minto pyramid</u>	11:59 pm, Sunday January 25

1. Before class: Complete the readings and two preparation assignments

Complete the readings and two assignments required to prepare for this class:

Pre-class reading

INDIVIDUAL: Complete two required readings for class

Pre-class assignments

INDIVIDUAL: Bring up to 2 slides to present

INDIVIDUAL: Draft an argument in the form of a Minto Pyramid

2. During class: Attend and participate in class

Communication and Persuasion through Data For Executives is a highly interactive and participative course. Each of the sessions is designed for active engagement. Reflecting on your choices and providing feedback on the work of others is essential to learning these skills.

Attendance and participation in all sessions is expected. Given the experiential design of the course, you cannot learn if you are not present. The grading reflects this. Students who do not attend the full class will not be able to receive a passing grade. Very limited exceptions will be made for exceptional circumstances.

Grading note: We understand that life intrudes on class. We would prefer that you step out of class to take phone calls or check your emails and texts. If you have to miss a substantial period of class for this, it will impact your grade, but not how we judge you as a person.

3. During class: Redraw & Present Slide - In-class on 2nd day

You will have a chance on Day 1 to present the slides you brought to class. Between Day 1 and Day 2 you will redraw the slides that you presented on Day 1 of class and present them again. Your Day 2 presentation will be evaluated and should incorporate your learnings from Day 1. Plan to improve the effectiveness of your delivery by incorporating learnings from the course content, your classmate's feedback, and the video of your Day 1 presentation.

4. After class: Synthesize your learnings from revising and presenting your slides - up to 2 pages - Due by 11:59PM am via Canvas on Sunday, Jan 18

Communicating effectively is about making thoughtful choices informed by the needs of your audience. Discuss your key learnings from the process of revising your data slides from Day 1 to Day 2.

See the [assignment](#) for more detail and the rubric for what we are looking for.

5. After class: Revise Your Minto Pyramid - Due by 11:59PM am via Canvas on Sunday, Jan 25

Effective persuasion rests on a logical foundation. Based on the feedback from your classmates and the best practices presented in class, revise your draft Minto pyramid from Day 2 of class.

See the [assignment](#) for more detail and the rubric for what we are looking for.