



DEPARTMENT OF APPLIED INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

TIA153 Rhetoric and Argumentation in the Digital Age, 7.5 credits

Retorik och argumentation i den digitala eran, 7,5 högskolepoäng

Second Cycle

Confirmation

This course syllabus was confirmed by Department of Applied Information Technology on 2017-09-28 and was last revised on 2023-05-30 to be valid from 2023-06-01, spring semester of 2023.

Field of education: Science 100%

Department: Department of Applied Information Technology

Position in the educational system

The course is an elective course in the programme specified below. It is an in-depth course in the second cycle.

The course can be part of the following programme: 1) Master in Communication (N2CMN)

Main field of studies

Communication

Specialization

A1F, Second cycle, has second-cycle course/s as entry requirements

Entry requirements

To be eligible for the course the student must have finished the courses TIA058 Theories of Communication, 7.5 credits and TIA174 Research Methods in Communication, 7.5 credits.

Learning outcomes

On successful completion of the course the student will be able to:

Knowledge and understanding

- demonstrate understanding of discourse analytical tools that are valuable for analysing persuasion in digital communicative contexts;

Competence and skills

- apply basic data-scraping techniques to collect sensible datasets of digital discourse as the basis for an empirical analysis;
- use big data corpus tools and methods to manage and navigate collected digital data in a motivated manner;
- apply discourse analytical tools to digital communication in order to inquire about societal challenges in relation to digital persuasion (e.g. mis- and dis-information; cyber-bullying; political polarisation);

Judgement and approach

- show an appreciation of the degree to which contemporary rhetorical analysis has grown out of, but also differs from, ancient accounts to rhetoric.

Course content

Persuasion can be defined as intentionally and successfully encouraging another person towards a certain course of action, likely against their will or inclination. Of all communication phenomena, forms of persuasion were the first subject to scholarly study, as far back as ancient times. Such ancient rhetorical accounts were devised when societies were organised in vastly different ways. Today, the largest part of our communication, including persuasion, happens in digital contexts where technology aids communication across geographical and temporal boundaries. While present day questions of persuasion, just as the frameworks for studying them, share something with those of former societies, they are also different from them. The intentional relay of mistruths and acts of bullying persist, though their forms and consequences differ in digital contexts in today's high-information societies. Other persuasive phenomena (e.g. concerning filter bubbles) are largely consequent from digital environments for communication.

This course focuses on contemporary discourse analytical methods for studying persuasion that takes place in digital contexts of communication. In addition to phenomena at the heart of ancient rhetorical notions (e.g. the intrinsic proofs, 'kairos'), opportunities for contemporary digital persuasion are often furnished by, for example: high-remixing, high-visuality, antagonism, information-overload and information-complexity. These raise new versions of important long-standing social questions (e.g. concerning access to – and moderation of – information, of digital literacies, etc.) and entirely new ones as important questions of our time, questions centrally of communication and of persuasion therein. To make exploration of these digital persuasive phenomena and important socio-political questions possible, big-data

scraping and big data analysis are taught in this course as prevalent modern-day approaches in the communication sciences to the study of digital discourse.

At several points in the course and therefore as a special focus of the course, communicative persuasion and the important social questions related to it will be explored with cases concerning climate change.

Form of teaching

The course education is provided through lectures and workshops. Lectures are of two types: online lectures, where discourse analytical frameworks will be taught; and in-class lectures, where persuasion in digital communication and questions connected to this will be taught. In-class lectures will usually have a workshop component so that students are given an opportunity to both: (i) practice empirical analysis of digital discourse, and (ii) discuss and debate the important social questions relating to digital persuasion that are covered in the course.

Language of instruction: English

Assessment

The course is examined through two modules:

- Module 1. Online tests to establish proficiency regarding discourse analytic frameworks, 3.5 credits.
- Module 2. An individually written empirical case study into a pertinent digital rhetoric question, 4 credits.

For the individually written empirical case study, students are permitted to supplement a failed assignment, if the examiner deems it possible for the student to achieve a pass grade by means of minor supplementation.

A student who has taken two exams in a course or part of a course without obtaining a pass grade is entitled to the nomination of another examiner. The student needs to contact the department for a new examiner, preferably in writing, and this should be approved by the department unless there are special reasons to the contrary (Chapter 6 Section 22 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

If a student has received a recommendation from the University of Gothenburg for special educational support, where it is compatible with the learning outcomes of the course and provided that no unreasonable resources are required, the examiner may decide to allow the student to sit an adjusted exam or alternative form of assessment.

In the event that a course has ceased or undergone major changes, students are to be guaranteed at least three examination sessions (including the ordinary examination session) over a period of at least one year, but no more than two years, after the course

has ceased/been changed. The same applies to placements and professional placements (VFU), although this is restricted to just one additional examination session.

Grades

The grading scale comprises: Pass with Distinction (VG), Pass (G) and Fail (U).

The grading scale for the set of online tests concerning discourse analytic frameworks is: Fail (U) Pass (G) or Pass with Distinction (VG). The grading scale for the individually written empirical case study is: Fail (U), Pass (G) or Pass with Distinction (VG).

To get a Pass for the whole course a student should get Pass (G) for the individually written empirical case study and a Pass (G) for the set of online tests concerning discourse analytic frameworks. To get a Pass with Distinction (VG) for the whole course a student should get Pass with Distinction (VG) for either assignment and a Pass (G) for the other assignment.

Course evaluation

After completion of the course the students are to be given the possibility of participating in a course evaluation anonymously. The processed results of the course evaluations are to be made accessible to students and also made available to new students at the beginning of the next course. Possible changes brought about as a result of course evaluations are to be described.

Additionally, the course coordinator will conduct a mid-term informal evaluation during the course, which will provide the course coordinator with the opportunity of incorporating students' feedback in the second half of the course.

Additional information

The course is offered for the last time in the autumn semester of 2023.