

## Seminar on Language and Deception Syllabus

TTh 3:10-4:55, Olin 103

**Instructor:** Mija Van Der Wege  
Office: Olin 135  
Phone: 4375  
Email: mvanderw  
Office Hours: W 2:00 – 4:00 (or by appt.)

### **Course description:**

In this course we will examine deception and other kinds of literal untruths. We will take up three main issues. The first is *what* it means to deceive and how people deceive others through language. What methods do they use, and how do these methods work? The second issue is *why* people deceive. What purposes do their deceptions serve—in court, in advertising, in bureaucracies, in business transactions, and in everyday face-to-face conversation? The third issue is the *ethics* of deception. Is it legitimate to deceive others, and if so, when and why?

What is the difference between a lie and an untruth? How do we distinguish between the two? How can others take advantage of our automatic language processing systems to deceive or persuade?

### **Required Texts:**

Readings will be made available in the library closed reserves and online on the course website (<http://www.acad.carleton.edu/curricular/PSYC/mija/psyc375>). You will need to be on campus to access the readings online and will need to be able to use Adobe Reader.

### **Optional Texts:**

We will be reading large parts of the following books. Most of them are inexpensive and a few copies of each are available at the bookstore. If the bookstore runs out of copies and you would like to purchase one, please let me know.

APA Publication Manual

Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*. New York: Vintage.

Crossen, C. (1994). *Tainted Truth: The Manipulation of Fact in America*. New York: Touchstone.

Galasinski, D. (2000). *The Language of Deception: A Discourse Analytical Study*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Holtgraves, T. (2002). *Language as Social Action: Social Psychology and Language Use*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Huff, D. (1954). *How to Lie with Statistics*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Nyberg, D. (1993). *The Varnished Truth: Truth Telling and Deceiving in Ordinary Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

**Expectations:**

1. *Mandatory **regular attendance*** at all classes. If you miss three (3) or more classes for whatever reason (including illness), you will fail the class. Additionally, plan on being to class on time.
2. *Active participation* in discussions. This includes familiarity with the assigned readings each class. You will also take *responsibility for **leading discussion on an assigned reading on two*** class days. You will have a partner and will need to collaborate with them on your presentations. I encourage you to be creative when planning your presentations. Class is long, and interactive (but educational) activities are encouraged.
3. *CAUCUS discussion*. To encourage you to complete the reading in a timely fashion and to begin a conversation about the reading before class, I would like you to submit **discussions** (a few questions or sentences or paragraphs) on the readings before each class on CAUCUS. Share any silly questions, piercing comments, idle thoughts, and inflammatory opinions you have (at least the ones regarding the assigned readings). Please do not just summarize the findings. Feel free to respond to what others have written or to discussions begun in class. Post by **noon** the day before class.

4. *Mini-projects.*

*Mini-project 1* (due 2/3): Record and transcribe one TV commercial break (3-5 advertisements/1-3 minutes of advertising). Write down the words used and any significant nonverbal communication and events in the ad. Describe how language and other kinds of nonverbal communication are used to deceive or mislead in these commercials. Try to make use of the concepts discussed in class and in the readings. The paper should be brief (2-3 pages). If you have problems finding access to the necessary equipment, please let me know as soon as possible.

*Mini-project 2* (due 3/2): Find one other example of deception and describe it, with documentation, in a brief write up (3-4 pages). Try to find examples related to the topics of the seminar (e.g., a biased news article, an infomercial, a horoscope, a friend telling a story, a euphemistic article or speech), and tie the class readings and discussions into your analysis of the deception.

5. *Term Paper*. In place of a course examination, students will complete a term paper (10-14 pages) on a relevant topic of your choice to be turned in to me by **noon, March 15**. An experimental proposal is the preferred format. Please make an appointment with me early on in the term to discuss your potential topic. I am happy to comment on paper drafts, provided you submit them by 3/5.

*Term paper proposal* (due 2/10): Write a one-page initial proposal for your term paper. Outline your general topic, your ideas for experimentation, and your method of analysis. Sign up for an appointment to talk to me about your ideas.

*Term paper* (due 3/15): The term paper should be a 10-14 page experimental proposal. The paper should be in APA format, with an introduction outlining previous research done on your topic (at least 10 articles), a method section outlining your proposed study, a results section describing how you might analyze your data, and a discussion section proposing implications in the field of communication of your proposed study. If you like, you can collect some data, but you must discuss your project with me before doing so.

**Grading:**

15% Class Attendance and Participation

20% Class presentations

15% CAUCUS discussions

20% Mini-Assignments

30% Term Paper

**Extension and Absence Policy:**

Late work will not be accepted or graded. Situations such as serious illness and personal emergencies are grounds for an extension. Having another assignment or exam due on the same day does not constitute a legitimate excuse. If you are involved in extracurricular activities that may take them off-campus on the day an assignment is due, please discuss options with me, but plan on submitting the work early.

**Topic schedule:**

1/6	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>“The Truth about Lies.” <i>Bill Moyers: The Public Mind</i></p>
1/8	<p><b>Truth and deception</b></p> <p>Bok, S. (1979). Is the “whole truth” attainable? <i>Lying: Moral choice in public and private life</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 3-17). New York: Vintage Books.</p> <p>Nyberg, D. (1993). Varieties of truth. <i>The varnished truth: Truth telling and deceiving in ordinary life</i> (Chapter 2, pp. 29-45). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Nyberg, D. (1993). The reverse of truth has a hundred thousand shapes. <i>The varnished truth: Truth telling and deceiving in ordinary life</i> (Chapter 3, pp. 46-62). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p>
1/13	<p><b>Ethics of lying and deception</b></p> <p>Bok, S. (1979). <i>Lying: Moral choice in public and private life</i> (Chapters 2-4, pp. 17-56). New York: Vintage Books.</p> <p>Nyberg, D. (1993). Truth telling is morally overrated. <i>The varnished truth: Truth telling and deceiving in ordinary life</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 7-26). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p>
1/15	<p><b>Inference and implicature</b></p> <p>Holtgraves, T. (2002). Speech acts and intentions: The things we do with words. <i>Language as Social Action: Social Psychology and Language Use</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 9-36). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.</p> <p>Grice, H. P. (1989). Logic and conversation. <i>Studies in the ways of words</i>. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.</p> <p>Sperber, D. &amp; Wilson, D. (1987). Precis of Relevance: Communication and cognition. <i>Brain and Behavioral Sciences</i>, 10, 697-754. [optional]</p>
1/20	<p><b>Evasion</b></p> <p>Galasinki, D. (2000). Deceptiveness of evasion. <i>The Language of Deception: A Discourse Analytical Study</i> (Chapter 4, pp. 55-70). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p> <p>Galasinki, D. (2000). Pragmatics of deception. <i>The Language of Deception: A Discourse Analytical Study</i> (Chapter 7, pp. 97-111). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.</p>
1/22	<p><b>Perjury</b></p> <p>Tiersma, P. M. (1990). The language of perjury: “literal truth,” ambiguity, and the false statement requirement. <i>Southern California Law Review</i>, 63, 373-431.</p>
1/27	<p><b>Innuendo</b></p> <p>Bell, D. (1997). Innuendo. <i>Journal of Pragmatics</i>, 27, 35-59.</p> <p>Cialdini, R. (1993). Weapons of influence. <i>Influence: Science and Practice</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 1-18). New York: HarperCollins.</p>

1/29	<p><b>Advertising</b></p> <p>“Consuming Images.” <i>Bill Moyers: The Public Mind</i>.</p> <p>Geis, M. L. (1982). Saying things indirectly. <i>The language of television advertising</i> (Chapter 2, pp. 25-58). New York: Academic Press.</p> <p>Geis, M. L. (1982). The strength of a claim. <i>The language of television advertising</i> (Chapter 3, pp. 59-83). New York: Academic Press.</p>
2/3	<p><b>Advertising</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Mini-project 1 due in class</i></span></p> <p>Geis, M. L. (1982). Comparatives. <i>The language of television advertising</i> (Chapter 4, pp. 84-108). New York: Academic Press.</p> <p>Calfee, J. (1997). Advertising and competition. <i>Fear of Persuasion: A New Perspective on Advertising and Regulation</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 4-18). Agora Communications.</p>
2/5	<p><b>Statistical reporting</b></p> <p>Huff, D. (1954). How to statisticulate. <i>How to lie with statistics</i> (Chapter 9, pp. 100-121). New York: W. W. Norton.</p> <p>Huff, D. (1954). How to talk back to a statistic. <i>How to lie with statistics</i> (Chapter 10, pp. 122-142). New York: W. W. Norton.</p> <p>Crossen, C. (1994). The numerical lies of advertising. <i>Tainted truth: The manipulation of fact in America</i> (Chapter 3, pp.70-97). New York: Touchstone.</p>
2/10	<p><b>Catch up</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Term paper proposal due</i></span></p>
2/12	<p><b>Perspective-taking</b></p> <p>Schober, M. F. (1998). Different kinds of conversational perspective-taking. In S. R. Fussell &amp; R. J. Kreuz (Ed.), <i>Social and Cognitive Approaches to Interpersonal Communication</i> (pp. 145-173). Mahwah: LEA.</p> <p>Kahneman, D. &amp; Tversky, A. (1984). Choices, values, and frames. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 39, 341-350.</p>
2/17	<p><b>Surveys and polls</b></p> <p>“Leading Questions.” <i>Bill Moyers: The Public Mind</i>.</p> <p>Clark, H. H &amp; Schober, M. F. (1992). Asking questions and influencing answers. In J. M. Tanur (Ed), <i>Questions about questions: Inquiries into the cognitive bases of surveys</i> (pp. 15-48). New York: Russell Sage Foundation.</p> <p>Crossen, C. (1994). False barometers of opinion. <i>Tainted truth: The manipulation of fact in America</i> (Chapter 4, pp. 98 -128). New York: Touchstone.</p>
2/19	<p><b>Obfuscation and political spin</b></p> <p>“The Illusion of News.” <i>Bill Moyers: The Public Mind</i>.</p> <p>Lutz, W. (1989). Involuntary conversions, preemptive counterattacks, and incomplete successes: The</p>

	<p><i>government, business, advertisers, and others use language to deceive you</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 1-21). New York: Harper &amp; Row.</p> <p>Wilson, J. (2002). Political discourse. In D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, &amp; H. Hamilton (Eds.), <i>The Handbook of Discourse Analysis</i> (Chapter 20, pp. 398-415). Malden, MA: Blackwell.</p>
2/24	<p><b>Self-deception</b></p> <p>Greenwald, A. (1980). The totalitarian ego. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 35, 603-618.</p> <p>Kassin, S. M. (1997). The psychology of confession evidence. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 52, 221-233.</p> <p>Gerrig, R. J. (1989). Suspense in the absence of uncertainty. <i>Journal of Memory &amp; Language</i>, 28(6), 633-648.</p>
2/26	<p><b>Psychics, magicians, &amp; con-artists</b></p> <p>Hyman, R. (1977). Cold reading: how to convince strangers that you know all about them. <i>The Zetetic (The Skeptical Inquirer)</i>, 1, 18-37.</p> <p>Nardi, P. (1984). Toward a social psychology of entertainment magic (conjuring). <i>Symbolic Interaction</i>, 7, 25-42.</p>
3/2	<p><b>Civility and politeness</b> <span style="float: right;"><i>Mini-project 2 due in class</i></span></p> <p>Holtgraves, T. (2002). The interpersonal underpinnings of talk: Face management and politeness. <i>Language as Social Action: Social Psychology and Language Use</i> (Chapter 2, pp. 37-63). Mahwah, NJ: LEA.</p> <p>Isaacs, E.A., &amp; Clark, H.H. (1990). Ostensible invitations. <i>Language in Society</i>, 19, 493-509.</p>
3/4	<p><b>Euphemism and nonserious speech</b></p> <p>Allan, K., &amp; Burrige, K. (1991). Euphemism, dysphemism, and cross-varietal synonymy. <i>Euphemism and dysphemism: Language used as shield and weapon</i> (Chapter 1, pp. 11-32). New York: Oxford University Press.</p> <p>Brackman, J. (1967). Onward and upward with the arts: The put-on. <i>The New Yorker</i>, 34-57, June 24, 1967.</p> <p>Schegloff, E. (2001). Getting serious: Joke → serious 'no'. <i>Journal of Pragmatics</i>, 33, 1947-1955.</p>
3/9	<p><b>Lying and its detection</b></p> <p>Goleman, D. (1982). Can you tell when someone is lying to you? <i>Psychology Today</i>.</p> <p>Ekman, P. (1988). Lying and nonverbal behavior: Theoretical issues and new findings. <i>Journal of Nonverbal Behavior</i>, 12, 163-175.</p> <p>Ekman, P. (1991). Who can catch a liar? <i>American Psychologist</i>, 46(9), 913-920.</p> <p>Nyberg, D. (1993). Civility: Revealing and concealing our thoughts. <i>The varnished truth: Truth telling and deceiving in ordinary life</i> (Chapter 6, pp. 111-136). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.</p> <p>Di Battista, P. (1994). Effects of planning on performance of trust-violating versus tactful, white lies: How are familiar speech acts cognitively represented? <i>Communication Studies</i>, 45, 174-186. [optional]</p>
3/15	<p><b>Term papers due at noon in Prof. Van Der Wege's office or mailbox</b></p>

