GENERAL INFORMATION:
Instructor: Dr. Niki Vlastara
Office (primary): 9900 Main St., Fairfax
Office (campus): ENT 175
Phone: 703-993-2141
e-mail: nvlastar@gmu.edu

Office Hours: By email and by appointment (zoom meeting)

COURSE PREREQUISITES: C or higher in MKTG 301/303, degree status

A course focusing on consumer behavior has the potential to be one of the most interesting and relevant for your professional and personal lives. First, we are all consumers and have vast amounts of experience buying and consuming products and services, as a result we can use the material in this course to reflect upon our own behavior. Second, we will examine concepts, processes and approaches that inform marketing strategy as to what, how, when, where and why people consume. To be a skilled marketer you need to understand your consumers and why they behave as they do. It is the aim of this course to equip you with current knowledge of how individual psychology and socio-cultural factors influence consumer behavior

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Purpose of the Course: This course focuses on the application of the behavioral sciences to understanding consumer behavior. Emphasis will be placed on developing an appreciation for the scope of the topic, understanding the essentials underlying consumer behavior, and developing the ability to relate such understanding to important issues faced by marketing practitioners. Traditional research-oriented topics will include perception, memory, affect, learning, persuasion, motivation, behavioral decision theory, and environmental (e.g., social and cultural) influences. All topic presentations will also include a discussion of practitioner-oriented managerial implications.

Specific Objectives:
1. To develop an understanding of the various internal and external influences that impact on consumer behavior and the wide range of perspectives and theories that can be used to study it (e.g., sociological, psychological, economic, etc.). (School Of Business learning goal #1 - Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the social, global, ethical, and legal contexts of business and will be able to reflect on the role of the individual in business)

2. To increase students' knowledge of terms, concepts, theories and tools that pertains to the study of buyer behavior and consumer psychology. (School Of Business learning goal #5 - Our students will demonstrate knowledge and skills appropriate for specialization in their majors.)

3. To help students understand the individual, psychological processes that affect consumer decision-making and purchase behavior (e.g., research on buyer motives, attitudes, and decision processes). (School Of Business learning goal #5 - Our students will demonstrate knowledge and skills appropriate for specialization in their majors.)

4. To help students appreciate the relevance of buyer behavior to marketing management for product, price, place, and promotion decisions. (School Of Business learning goal #4 - Our students will demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to apply knowledge of core business disciplines including accounting, finance, information systems, management, marketing, and operations management.)

5. To instill in students a healthy skepticism that makes you want to interpret theory and research relevant to buyer behavior for yourself, rather than simply accepting someone else's interpretation. (School Of Business learning goal #6 - Our students will demonstrate an understanding of how research in the business disciplines contributes to knowledge and how such research is conducted.)

6. To explore how international, cross-cultural considerations influence consumers around the world. (School Of Business learning goal #1 - Our students will demonstrate an understanding of the social, global, ethical, and legal contexts of business and will be able to reflect on the role of the individual in business)

7. To develop students' ability to analyze, and describe in writing, relevant buyer behavior topics as they apply to actual marketing activities (e.g., advertising, pricing, distribution, sales). (School Of Business learning goal #2 - Our students will demonstrate an understanding of and the ability to apply knowledge of professional skills necessary for success in business including effective business writing)


COURSE CONTENT:
Every week there will be PowerPoint (PPT) lecture presentations, videos, assignments, cases, and discussions. Active involvement on your part is required. Questions, comments, insights, observations, etc., are expected and welcome.

Lectures: PPT presentations will be used primarily to introduce key concepts, clarify difficult topics, and supplement the text. The PPT slides are only an outline of the class material and will not be sufficient for preparing for exams.

Course Blackboard Site:
The course Blackboard site will be used for a variety of purposes this semester – e.g., online class discussions, distribution of assignments, notes, and lecture material, exams, posting assignments, and class announcements. You should plan on using Blackboard to discuss topics and material from the different concepts covered. This course requires that you actively participate in discussions, post relevant questions, and critically analyze peer opinions, etc.,
throughout the semester through the discussion board. In the spirit of this class, I would like to have this forum be professional and informative. While you might disagree with comments from you peers, you should avoid making personal remarks and limit discussions to class-related topics.

**Exercises, Assignments, and Case Analyses:** These may occur throughout the semester and are designed to encourage application of the concepts covered in the course. Additionally, there are four written assignments - you will select two to hand in for a grade. Each written assignment is to be at least 4 and no more than 6 pages in length. NOTE: Assignments are due on the due date noted in the schedule.

**Individual Assignments**

You must choose two of the four assignments to hand in for a grade.

* Write-ups are to be at least four (4) and no more than six (6) pages in length.*

** IMPORTANT – You may not use examples that were used in the text. **

** IMPORTANT – All assignments are due on the due dates **

Please be thorough and specific in your answer to all parts of these questions. However, you SHOULD NOT do external “research” for the assignments.

**ASSIGNMENT 1:** Demographics Assignment – (due 9/28)

Pick two print magazines (online magazines are not acceptable) that are targeted toward consumers in different groups in any one of the demographic categories listed below (see text chapters 4 & 5). For example, select a magazine that is targeted towards Baby Boomers and a magazine that is targeted towards young children (two age groups), or a magazine targeted towards males and a magazine targeted towards females (two gender groups). You may need to do some research to find two magazines that you can use!

a. Income groups  
b. Age groups  
c. Occupation groups  
d. Ethnic groups  
e. Gender groups  

(1) Name and describe the two magazines – which demographic category and groups within the category are they targeting?  
(2) Analyze and describe: (a) the differences and similarities in the types of products advertised across the two magazines, and (b) the differences and similarities in the characteristics of the ads (how do they look, how are they selling, the visuals, language used, etc...) across the two magazines.

The analyses and descriptions should be specific, thorough and detailed for both (a) and (b). **Note: You will need to provide some “organization” or “structure” for these analyses – most magazines have many, many ads in them and you are not going to be able to analyze and describe every ad.**
ASSIGNMENT 2: Perception Assignment – (due 10/19)
According to some research, consumers are bombarded with thousands of commercial messages every single day. As a result, marketers are constantly battling to gain consumers’ attention. There are many different strategies/techniques that have been found to be attention getting. We discussed a number of these in class and some are discussed in the text.

Your job for this assignment is to note those marketing communications that successfully grabbed your attention. Specifically, you need to describe two advertisements, from two different ad categories (e.g., TV, radio, billboards, signs, in-store, magazines, newspapers, online, mobile), that grabbed your attention recently (within the last three months). These should be recent ads (within the last 3 months) you actually were exposed to as a consumer - NOT ones you “researched” on the Internet.

For each of the ads separately you should:
1. Include the ad or describe it in detail (so I’ll be able to know specifically what it is. Providing a URL is not sufficient). Describe specifically where you saw the ad.
2. Describe any other ads (or other marketing communications) that were present in your selected ad’s immediate environment (and that were, therefore, competing for your attention). For example, this could include the other ads in a TV commercial break, other ads in the magazine/newspaper, the presence of salespeople, other radio ads, etc. You should be pretty specific with your descriptions – e.g., how many other ads, the types of messages in the ads, how effective these other ads were, etc.
3. Describe any other stimuli (i.e., non-marketing – e.g., roommate talking to you, music playing, etc.) that were competing for your attention as well at that time.
4. Using attention-related concepts from class and the text describe why you think this particular ad message was successful at grabbing your attention. In other words, what specific attention concepts can be used to explain why these ads caught your attention? (see class notes and text for examples of these – e.g., characteristics of the stimulus [ad], characteristics of the situation, and/or characteristics of the individual [you]…).

** Remember – explain, describe, and justify all your answers.

ASSIGNMENT 3: Brand equity leveraging assignment – (due 11/2)

Search on line to a store/site that carries a wide variety of products (e.g., grocery store; Wal-Mart/Target; home improvement store, drug store). Find two examples of products using a brand leveraging strategy. For each of these products separately, answer the following questions:

1. Describe the product you selected: What is the brand? What is the product?

2. What was the original product associated with the brand name?

3. What specific type of brand leveraging strategy (four types were discussed) is being used? Explain why it is this one.
4. Indicate whether you think it is an effective brand leveraging strategy (NOTE: don't just describe if it is a product that you like or not or a "good" product). Explain/discuss why or why not – thoroughly justify/explain your answer using specific brand leveraging concepts from class e.g., fit, brand associations, brand schemas, etc.).

5. Indicate whether there might be any negative effects associated with the use of this brand leveraging strategy specifically (again, answer specifically in terms of the specific brand leveraging strategy). Explain/discuss why or why not.

ASSIGNMENT 4: Information search assignment – (due 11/16)

Choose two of the following product categories (i.e., select two of the four below). For each product category separately answer the following questions:

i. Automobiles
ii. Energy drinks
iii. Fast food restaurants
iv. Auto insurance providers

1. Name and specifically discuss the brands that are in your (a) awareness set, (b) consideration (evoked) set, (c) inert set, and (d) inept set. For each set this should include: Which brands, why this many, why these specific ones - Don't just make a list of these brands!

2. Discuss in what ways you think each of your four sets will differ/be the same as other students’ in this class (i.e., compare/contrast the specific brands, number of brands, etc.).

** Finally: Choose one of the brands in one of the product categories you listed above and discuss how this specific information set information could be relevant to that company’s specific marketing activities for the brand (i.e., how could the information about the four sets from part 1 and 2 be used by the marketer?)

Participation & Attendance:  Because this course is a 300-level course, participation is particularly important by participating in the scheduled meetings and discussion board. You are encouraged to keep current with consumer behavior related issues by reading newspapers, business magazines, books, and online news sources. *The Wall Street Journal, The Washington Post, Fortune* and *BusinessWeek* are all highly recommended.

Group Project: Detailed information about the project will be provided at the beginning of the semester on Blackboard (There are multiple documents related to the project. Please make sure you download and read them all!). The project is designed to give students experience both in working in groups and in applying your understanding of consumer behavior concepts (as studied in this course). There will be 3-4 students per group and the instructor will assign students in groups. **Projects used for credit in other classes may NOT be used for credit in this class.** The purpose of the group project is to give you experience in applying your understanding of consumer behavior (as taught in this course) to an analysis of a well-known branded product. The project requires teams to choose a national brand name
**product** (not a service) to be evaluated in depth. At the end of the course the team will make a collaborative, virtual presentation of their analyses and recommendations.

** All students are required to participate, contribute, and cooperate in their groups throughout the entire semester. Individuals should not plan on “making up” effort as the semester winds down.

** It will be the group’s responsibility to manage how your group functions, including handling most minor problems that arise. If a group member consistently fails to contribute, the rest of the group should come speak to me. In the extreme case, members have the right to “fire” members, but only if I have been consulted in advance and if the team is willing to take a five-percent (5%) penalty on the grade for their project. Fired group members will receive a grade of zero for the entire project.

Instructor will assign students to different groups by the second week of the course.

The project involves four elements: an initial choice of the brand to be studied, a detailed progress report, an overview of your selected CB concepts, and the final, multimedia presentation. Team presentations will be posted on Blackboard on the date as indicated in the syllabus and the Blackboard calendar.

There will be four elements of this project: (1) Selection of national brand (due 9/16). (2) Progress Report (due on 9/30). (3) CB Concept Analysis (due on 10/28). (4) Final paper and presentation (due on 12/4).

Please read carefully all details on your Group Project next to your Syllabus for important instructions, deadlines and grading structure for each component of the project.

**Exams:** There will be three exams this semester. All three exams will consist of multiple choice questions that address issues raised in the textbook, materials posted on blackboard, and PowerPoint lectures.

Exams in this course require all students to use the Respondus Lockdown Browser with a camera monitor. Please note that you cannot take the exam using a standard browser such as Safari, Firefox, Chrome, Microsoft Edge, or Internet Explorer. The LockDown Browser application needs to be installed on your computer first.

The link to detailed instructions is posted in Blackboard. You could also go directly to the ITS website using the following url: https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/how-to-install-and-use-the-respondus-lockdown-browser

Attention: a web camera is required to take your exam. You will be recorded during the exam. Any "unusual" behavior will be auto-flagged by Blackboard and then reviewed by the instructor.

You must take the Exams at the assigned day and time.
George Mason University Honor Code & Academic Integrity: (See also Appendix A)

The GMU Honor Code (Link) applies to all activities and assignments in this course. Students will refrain from cheating, lying, plagiarizing, and stealing. All students are expected to complete their own original work, except in cases where the teacher instructs students to work in groups, and to give credit to any other person or source whose ideas and printed materials (including those on the Internet or websites) are used, paraphrased or directly quoted. You also may not borrow the sequence of ideas, the arrangement of material, or the pattern of thought of someone else without proper acknowledgement. Please note: Faculty are obligated to submit any Honor Code violations or suspected violations to the Honor Committee without exception. The School of Business Honor Code Sanctions Policy is posted on the class Blackboard site https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/.

(Projects used for credit in other classes may NOT be used for credit in this class.)

GRADING:

Exam 1 15 points  
Exam 2 15 points  
Exam 3 15 points  
Group Project 30 points
  Brand Selection 2 points  
  Progress report 5 points  
  CB Concept Analysis 8 points  
  Final paper & PPT presentation 14 points  
  Peer Evaluation 1 point

Assignments (2) 20 points  
Discussion Board 5 points

GRADING SCALE:

TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS TO BE EARNED 100 points

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Grade Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>93 – 100 points</td>
<td>A</td>
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<tr>
<td>90 – 92.9 points</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>3.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>87 – 89.9 points</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83 – 86.9 points</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>80 – 82.9 points</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>77 – 79.9 points</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>2.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>73 – 76.9 points</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
60 – 72.9 points: D 1.0
Below 60 points: F 0.0

- Expectations for all assignments: Since this is a 300-level course I have high expectations and standards for work handed in during the semester. All work in this class should be neat, well organized, and professional looking – appropriate as professional, business writing. Without exception, handwritten work will not be accepted.

I expect all students to write business English accurately and clearly. The minimum writing standard for assignments is a maximum of one gross writing error per page of a double-spaced typescript. Examples of gross errors are: to begin a sentence without a capital letter; to end a sentence without a period or other punctuation mark; to misspell; to confuse "its" and "it's"; to confuse plurals and possessives, "companies" versus "company's"; and so forth. Slight differences of style, such as use or absence of commas in some instances, are not gross writing errors.

Readability/style, clarity, and writing quality **will** be part of the overall grade for all written assignments.

**All** written work **must** be double-spaced, use 12 pt. font, and have page numbers and one-inch margins. Additionally:

- Careful and complete citations of sources are expected for all written assignments where they are required.
- Assignments should be checked carefully for grammar, punctuation, spelling, and readability – these **will** be taken into account during grading.

**Papers not following any of these guidelines will have their grades negatively impacted.**

Additional Writing Information: To cite and reference research sources, please use APA style. Specific instructions for in-text citations and referencing are found in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 6th Edition* or at http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/.

To help manage the citations and seamlessly create reference lists, Mason supports free software called Zotero at https://www.zotero.org/.

George Mason University has a writing center that can help you improve your English writing skills. More information is available at http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/

- **Deadlines:** All deadlines are final. **Assignments turned in after the deadline will be considered late and will be subject to a 10% per day penalty.**

- **Exams:** No make-up exams will be given unless there is a legitimate, university approved medical or family emergency. **No** excuses will be accepted after the exam is given.

**MY ACCESSIBILITY: OFFICE HOURS & MEETINGS**

I look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible during the semester. I will be glad to talk with you about any aspect of the course – or about anything that is on your mind. Please let me know if I can help. To maximize the benefits of our meetings (online), students are
encouraged to make appointments. Additionally, e-mail is an excellent way to get in touch with me. Please include all relevant information in your e-mail and I will respond back to you as soon as possible.

**Special note on electronic communications:**

Students must use their Mason email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class. See [http://masonlive.gmu.edu](http://masonlive.gmu.edu) for more information.

For all class activities, you must use your GMU email address/account. This includes Blackboard. The use of a different address may result in loss of all points for that portion of the class.

You may use your choice of email addresses for correspondence, but if I am not familiar with the name in the email, I will likely delete it for protection of my computing resources. Please be sure to identify the matter of the email in the subject line. **Please include your full name (first and last name, course number and section number) and please be aware that rules of grammar and spelling apply to emails; they are not text messages.**

**Other Useful Campus Resources**

The Writing Center
The Writing Center is a valuable resource for students. If you are unfamiliar with business writing, or if your writing skills are not as strong as you’d like, please plan a little extra time to get help with the Writing Center.

The Writing Center is located in Robinson Hall A114, (703-993-1200), [http://writingcenter.gmu.edu](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu)

University Libraries
You are strongly encouraged to use the University Databases and Libraries. You may want to use the “Ask a Librarian” service: [http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html](http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html)

Counseling And Psychological Services (CAPS): (703) 993-2380; [http://caps.gmu.edu](http://caps.gmu.edu)

Learning Services
The University provides students with a variety of videos, downloads and seminars to improve your academic performance. Please see the website for a detailed listing: [https://learningservices.gmu.edu/](https://learningservices.gmu.edu/)

Office of Disability Services
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact The Offices of Disability Services (ODS) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Please take care of this during the first two
weeks of the semester. More information about ODS is available at http://www.gmu.edu/student/drc

Student athletes
If you are a student athlete participating in the sport during this semester, please let me know during the first two weeks of class.

Religious observances
Students who will miss class for religious reasons should inform me of their anticipated absences as soon as possible.

Inclement weather
Information regarding weather-related changes in the University’s schedule (e.g., closing or late opening) will be provided on the GMU website and via MasonAlert. Students should sign up for the Mason Alert system to provide emergency information of various sorts at https://alert.gmu.edu

Emergencies
An emergency poster exists in each classroom explaining what to do in the event of crises and that further information about emergency procedures exists on http://www.gmu.edu/service/cert

The Public Safety Department offers a variety of courses and services. Please discover these resources at https://police.gmu.edu/programs-and-services/

Other
There are a number of additional resources available to you on the School of Business website.

In addition, University Life has many resources available to students. You should explore these offering and take advantage of every one of these you can.

University Policies
The University Catalog, http://catalog.gmu.edu, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university academic affairs. Other policies are available at http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/. All members of the university community are responsible for knowing and following established policies.

** The instructor reserves the right to vary from policies outlined in this syllabus. This syllabus and schedule are my best estimate of how class will proceed. Occasional changes to the schedule and assignments will be announced on Blackboard. 
# Course Calendar

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class days and dates</th>
<th>Student Responsibilities/Key Topics</th>
<th>Milestones and Key Events</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 01 August 24th</td>
<td>Introduction to the course and overview of the Syllabus Ch. 01: Consumer Behavior and Marketing Strategy</td>
<td>• Introduction to the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 02 August 31st</td>
<td>Ch. 02: Cross-Cultural Variations in Consumer Behavior Chap. 03: The Changing American Society Values</td>
<td>• Discussion/Questions about the Group Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 03 September 7th</td>
<td>Ch. 04: The Changing American Society: Demographics and Social Stratification Ch. 5: The Changing American Society: Subcultures</td>
<td>• Discussion Board – with Instructor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 04 September 14th</td>
<td>Ch. 06: The American Society: Families &amp; Households Ch. 07: Group Influences on Consumer Behavior</td>
<td>• Discussion Board – with Instructor • Group Project – Brand Selection is due on September 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 05 September 21st</td>
<td>Ch. 08: Perception</td>
<td>• September 21st – Exam 1 on Chap. 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, &amp; 07.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 06 September 28th</td>
<td>Ch. 09: Learning, Memory and Product Positioning</td>
<td>• Assignment #1 is due on September 28 • Discussion Board (Apple Watch) due by October 4th • Group Project – Progress Report is due September 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 07 October 5th</td>
<td>Ch. 10: Motivation, Personality &amp; Emotion</td>
<td>• Discussion Board (Apple) due by October 11th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 08 October 12th</td>
<td>Ch. 11: Attitudes and Influencing Attitudes</td>
<td>• Discussion Board (Pepsi vs. Coke) due by October 18th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 09 October 19</td>
<td>Ch. 12: Self Concept &amp; Lifestyle</td>
<td>• Assignment #2 is due on October 19 • Discussion Board (Las Vegas) due by October 25th</td>
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<td>Week 10 October 26</td>
<td>Ch. 13: Situational Influences</td>
<td>• October 26th, Exam 2 Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, &amp; 12. • Discussion Board (Las Vegas) due by November 1st • Group Project – CB Concepts Analysis is due on October 28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 11 November 2</td>
<td>Ch. 14: Consumer Decision Process and Problem Recognition Ch. 15: Information Search</td>
<td>• Assignment #3 is due on November 2nd</td>
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<td>Week 12 November 9</td>
<td>Ch. 16: Alternative Evaluation and Selection</td>
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<td>Week 13 November 16</td>
<td>Ch. 17: Outlet Selection &amp; Purchase Ch. 18: Post-Purchase Processes, Customer Satisfaction, and Customer Commitment</td>
<td>• Assignment #4 is due on November 16th</td>
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<td>Week 14 November 23</td>
<td>Ch. 19: Organizational Buyer Behavior Ch. 20: Marketing Regulation and Consumer Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 15 November 30</td>
<td>Final Group Project is due on December 4th, 2020</td>
<td>• Final Group Project Report is due on December 4th, 2020</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 16 December 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>EXAM #3 (Chapters 13 - 20)</strong></td>
<td>• December 9 – Exam #3</td>
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Exams in blue, Discussion Board in Red, Assignments & Group Project in Green
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<th>First Offense</th>
<th>Type of Violation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Of opinion</td>
<td>UG-Non-Freshman Students (Including Transfer Students)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Approved May 2016</td>
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<td>School of Business: Recommendations for Honor Code Violations:</td>
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