GENERAL INFORMATION:
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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)


CLASS CONTENT:
Classes may include lectures, videos, exercises (both in-class and out), cases, and discussions. Active involvement on your part is required. Questions, comments, insights, observations, etc., are expected and welcome. Although there will be a fair amount of lecture material, this will be an interactive course.

Lectures: Straight lectures will be used primarily to introduce key concepts, clarify difficult topics, and supplement the text. Copies of the PPT presentations will be available on Blackboard. It is strongly recommended that you take notes during classes – the PPT slides are only an outline of the class material and will not be sufficient for preparing for exams.

Course Blackboard Site: (GMU 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, and class announcements. You should plan on using Blackboard to discuss topics and material from class
outside the classroom. This course requires that you actively participate in discussions, post relevant questions, and critically analyze peer opinions, etc., throughout the semester. 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. Some of these exercises will involve in-class activities/discussion. Additionally, there are four written assignments -- you will select two to hand in for a grade (these are described in a separate section at the end of the syllabus). Each written assignment is to be at least 4 and no more than 7 pages in length. NOTE: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date noted in the schedule.

**Class Participation & Attendance:** Because this course is a 300-level course, and interactive in nature, class participation is particularly important. Students are expected to attend class, have read the assigned chapters in the text and to complete any relevant assignments before coming to class.


**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) to a “real-world” field research project. All students will participate in a “Consumer Behavior Observational Research” project focusing on the analysis of consumer (buyer) behavior in a retail setting. There will be 4-5 students per group and students will choose their own groups. **Projects used for credit in other classes may NOT be used for credit in this class.** The project will require groups to select a retail (store) setting and conduct a “quasi-ethnography” which is a form of observational field research of consumer behavior. Based on these observations a report on the consumer behavior in this setting will be completed. Recommendations for the retailer will be made and supported/justified by solid knowledge and understanding of consumer behavior.

**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.**

Group sign-ups will take place in class during the second week of classes – this is mandatory and you are responsible for getting into a group for this project.
There will be four elements of this project (more details will be provided throughout the semester). (1) An initial research-based, written description (4-6 pages) of your selected retail setting will be due on 2/11. (2) A formal mid-project progress report (8-10 pages) will be due on 3/24. This deliverable will include handing in copies of the group members’ field notes and the “thick descriptions” based on them. (3) A final written report (10-12 pages) describing your research project and presenting your recommendations based on your observations (due on 4/28). (4) A short group presentation during the last class of the semester (4/28). The presentation must use Powerpoint and be fifteen minutes long. The presentation will present the results of your research and your recommendations in an executive summary format. All team members must participate, although not necessarily for equal periods of time. Finally, a confidential peer evaluation of each group members’ efforts will be part of the final group project grade.

**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 covered in class, and lectures. *It is very important that you come to class and take notes and keep up with the assigned readings in order to perform well on the tests*. The first two exams will be given during normal class sessions. The final (which is not cumulative) will be held during our final exam period.

**Attendance & Participation Policy:**
*Participation (and therefore, attendance) is strongly encouraged.* Class material will supplement, and often go beyond, text material. Materials discussed in class may not, in fact, be based on material that is in the text. You will be responsible for everything that is discussed or handed out in class. Additionally, I reserve the right to announce changes to the course if necessary. Students will be responsible for knowledge about these changes by attending class.

• Out of courtesy to your peers, students are expected to be in class on time and to remain for the entire class period. Multiple late arrivals are disruptive to the class and are not acceptable. Arriving late or leaving early will negatively affect your grade.

**George Mason University Honor Code & Academic Integrity:**
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. **Projects used for credit in other classes may NOT be used for credit in this class.**

**Special Accommodations**: If you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office 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.

GRADING:

Exam 1 100 points
Exam 2 100 points
Exam 3 100 points
Group Project 205 points
  Initial description 30 points
  Progress report 60 points
  Final paper & presentation 115 points
Assignments (2) 70 points
  575 points

GRADING SCALE: A (575-538); A- (537-515); B+ (514-498); B (497-475); B- (474-457); C+ (456-440); C (439-400); D (399-342); F (<342)

• 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 stapled, double-spaced, use 12 pt. font, and have page numbers and one-inch margins. Additionally:
  
  Please do not use any sort of report folders (e.g., plastic sleeves, etc.).
  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/](http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/)

* **Deadlines:** All deadlines are final. Assignments are due at the start of class on the due date. Assignments handed in after the deadline (i.e., any time after the start of class) 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. Simply going to the doctor is NOT an excuse. A written note must explain why you could not be in class. **No** excuses will be accepted after the exam is given. Students missing either of the first two exams with a legitimate, excused absence must clear this with me prior to the exam. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

**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, 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 if I am not in my office.

**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 in class or on Blackboard. All assignments should be prepared for in-class discussion on the date they are listed.

**Tentative Class Schedule**

1. 1/21 Course Syllabus & Introduction; The Study of CB - Ch. 1

2. 1/28 Ch. 20, 12 & 2 – Ethics & Regulation; Self-Concept; Cross-cultural CB

   MANDATORY – Group Sign-ups in class

3. 2/4 Ch. 2 (cont), 6 & 7 – Cross-cultural CB; Families/Households & Group Influences

4. 2/11 Ch. 8 – Perception; **Assignment #1 due**

   *Group project initial selection and description due*

5. 2/18 EXAM 1 – (Ch. 1, 2, 6, 7, 12, 20; Bring Scantron & Pencil)

6. 2/25 Ch. 8 & 9 – Perception (cont.); Learning & Memory; **Assignment #2 due**

7. 3/3 Ch. 9 & 10 – Product Positioning; Motivation

8. 3/10 *No Class – SPRING BREAK*
Individual Assignments

You must choose two of the four assignments to hand in for a grade. I will only grade two assignments per person.

* Write-ups are to be at least four (4) and no more than seven (7) pages in length.*

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

** IMPORTANT – All assignments are due at the start of class **

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 2/11)

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
(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 2/25)

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 3/17)

Go to a store 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 (we discussed four in class) 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 4/21)

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?)