

## Semester at Sea Course Syllabus

### Consumer Behavior SEMS 2500-106 Spring 2013

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Text: Michael R. Solomon (2013), Consumer Behavior: Buying, Having, and Being, 10th Edition, Pearson/Prentice-Hall (**Required**).

Class notes, instructional material, grades, announcements, and student assignments will be posted on-line.

#### **Course Description:**

This course is an introduction to the world of consumer behavior. The discipline borrows from several social sciences including psychology, sociology, and anthropology to explain behavior in the marketplace. In this course, the student will explore how perceptions, learning, memory, personality, and attitudes influence consumption behavior, how consumption changes during one's life cycle, and how powerful cultural and subcultural influences are on consumers. Students will explore the area of buying and consumption behavior as an important subset of human behavior and develop an appreciation of the theoretical foundations of this topic.

The main course objectives are to provide students with an understanding of the basic concepts, principles, and theories of consumer behavior and apply relevant consumer behavior concepts to the creation of marketing strategy. Furthermore, we will have the opportunity to see first-hand, the consumption behavior of consumers at the many ports we will visit which will become a major learning mechanism for this course.

#### **Course Learning Objectives**

After completing this course, you should be able to:

1. Analyze the meaning and influences guiding the decisions and behaviors of culturally driven phenomenon.
2. Question the power of individual influences on decision-making and consumption.
3. Relate internal dynamics such as personality and motivation to the choices consumers make.
4. Relate group dynamics and the relative influence of various group members to the choices made by groups of people.
5. Evaluate the influence of culture and subculture on consumer consumption preferences.

6. Appraise the applicability of consumer behavior theories to interpreting why consumers behave as they do.
7. Assess the components and stages of the individual decision-making process.
8. Assess the components and stage of the group decision-making process.
9. Understand the strategic role of segmentation and customer satisfaction, as well as the importance of consumer research,
10. Identify and interpret group and cultural consumer influences' impact on consumer choices,
11. Identify and interpret personal consumer influences' impact on consumers choices, and
12. Understand and apply the fundamental decision making approaches used by consumers.
13. Appreciate consumer diversity – including differences in consumption across our parts of call.

### **Course Components**

- Perceptions and Product Knowledge: Consumers in the Marketplace
- Power of Personality and Motivation in Buyer Behavior
- Attitudes as Predictors of Behavior
- Consumers as Decision Makers
- Group and Family Decision Making
- The Influence of Culture on Consumer Behavior
- Project and Presentation: Consumption in a Cultural Context
- Field Experiences

### **Learning Methodology:**

The learning methodology used in this course consists of lectures, written assignments, experiential exercises, class discussion, quizzes, consumption journal, field experiences, field lab, case analysis and discussion, homework, group project, films, and exams.

### **Reading and Written Assignments:**

You are expected to read textbook assignments and assigned outside readings prior to class lectures/discussions. Look for major points and be prepared to both ask and answer questions in class. Listen and participate in the lectures/discussions in class.

All written work must be typed. Include a cover page with your name, name of assignment, date submitted, and name of the course of all submitted work along with a header on all pages with your name on it. This is a class utilizing computers, therefore, your entire work product will be expected to be error free and professionally presented using the software we are studying. If not, your grade will suffer accordingly!

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date due. Late submission of assignments will be assessed a penalty of a letter grade drop per day. No exceptions are made.

## **Grading:**

Your final grade in this course will be based on three examinations, consumption journal, country profiles, a group project, field lab paper, class participation, homework assignments, and quizzes. The relative weights of these requirements are shown in the table below:

Exam 1	15%
Exam 2	15%
Exam 3	15%
Consumption Journal (Vietnam Experience)	15%
Reflection Paper (Vietnam Experience)	5%
Country Profiles	10%
Group Project (Interviews)	15%
Quizzes, Assignments, and Class Participation	5%
Total	100%

Your final grade for this course is based on the following table:

<b>A 93 – 100</b>	<b>C 73 – 76</b>
<b>A- 90 – 92</b>	<b>C- 70 – 72</b>
<b>B+ 87 – 89</b>	<b>D+ 67 – 69</b>
<b>B 83 – 86</b>	<b>D 63 – 66</b>
<b>B- 80 – 82</b>	<b>D- 60 – 62</b>
<b>C+ 77 – 79</b>	<b>F &lt; 60</b>

## **Exams:**

There are three scheduled exams planned for the semester. They will contain multiple choice and true/false questions as well as essay/discussion questions on material covered in the prior weeks. However, the intent of this course is to measure conceptualization rather than memorization skills. Thus, the major emphasis of the exams will be the essay/discussion questions. Questions for the test will include all assigned reading assignments, anything covered in class, information presented by guest speakers, all information in the text, on-site visits, assigned web sites, and cases.

## **Field Experiences:**

Twenty percent of the contact hours for this course are provided by field work. Being able to visit so many countries offers many unique and personal experiences. We will attempt to take advantage of these opportunities to explore and critically reflect upon how the culture relates to consumer behavior.

### ***Field Lab:***

We will visit a tourist site, a marketplace, a business, and have a group dinner that is representative of that culture (Vietnam) on Tuesday February 12th. This will be a group visit in which all students of the class will participate. Upon completion of this field lab, each student will write a reflection paper (4-5 pages) as to what they learned and how it pertains to consumer behavior. Further directions will be given one week before this field lab. Attendance is mandatory.

### ***Consumption Journal:***

In consumer behavior, it is important for the student to have sound understanding of how consumers search for, purchase, and use products and services. A key experiential exercise to communicate these concepts will be consumption journal assignment. This assignment enables students to observe and record their own consumption habits and to explore the social and psychological factors which may be influencing their and others' purchase decisions.

The consumption journal includes three major components. The first part requires each student to maintain a personal consumption journal at four ports we visit. It consists of descriptions of products and services that they purchased, where they were purchased, why they were purchased, and what feelings were associated with the purchase. A minimum of five purchases per port must be included in the journal. See Appendix A for sample journal entry.

For the second part of assignment, each student will create a list of ten products/services, which they own and/or regularly use. Students select only those products and services, which best portrayed their personality, values, and lifestyle. The list must contain detailed information, such as brands, sizes, colors, and/or models of the products and services. See Appendix B for sample 10 product list.

For the third part of assignment, each student will focus on two products/services they purchased in one of the four ports they used for the consumption assignment. The student will list the advertisements they observed for these products. Collect newspaper, magazines, brochures, flyers, or take pictures of displays, store fronts, billboards, etc. that attracted you to make the purchase. The advertisements then will serve as the medium for short analysis paper. For the paper, the analysis of each advertisement is broken down into three sections. First, each student has to identify between four to six consumer concepts used in the advertisement. Second, each student will identify and explain the demographic and psychographic segments to which the ad was designed to appeal. Finally, each student will explain whether or not they fit into the identified target market. See Appendix C for sample advertisement analysis.

### ***Country Profiles:***

Groups of 3-4 members will be formed and each group will be assigned two ports on our itinerary. Before arriving at the port, each group will research consumer market characteristics of their assigned country and produce a written summary. Also, each group will be assigned a second port (different than the one assigned for the written

report) and while at the port they are required to visit retail establishments, eateries, tourist sites, and public areas to observe consumption behaviors. After departing the port, the group will make a small 5-10 minute presentation of their observations and then the second group will present their written summary of the port/country. We will then compare and contrast the two presentations and discuss the implications.

### **Quizzes:**

Every class you should be prepared for a short quiz on the material assigned for that day.

### **Group Project:**

Much work, not only in the Business School but also in the “real world,” is done by project teams or groups. Done correctly, a group work experience can be a joy – a synergy of talents and ideas, as well as effective division of labor. When it works like it is supposed to, the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts. Unfortunately, when things go wrong, they can go very wrong – unresolved conflicts, delinquent group members, inefficient work strategies, and substandard products. An important aim of this course is to teach you how to do group projects better. Throughout the term we will periodically provide information and suggestions about better group dynamics. We will provide intermediate deadlines and periodically monitor group progress. At the end of the semester, each member of the group will be asked to provide written feedback regarding the group experience. Also, each group member will evaluate the quality and quantity of work performed by the other group members. A team member that fails to participate in this activity will result in earning zero points for this assignment.

### ***Project: Consumption in a Cultural Context***

***Instructions:*** The project for this course requires that you analyze and describe the consumption behaviors and sources of influence associated with some widely recognized cultural occurrence. The cultural occurrence is yours to choose. However, the assignment will likely be easier to conduct if you choose a context that is occurring around the time of this course (e.g., Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, New Year’s Eve, and Yule). The context must be one that is not simply an individual expression of self, but rather a consumption opportunity driven by individual, group, and cultural influences. Your primary task is to analyze the consumer behavior associated with the context of choice. Your analysis should be supported by examples and descriptions of the behaviors identified.

- Begin by describing the cultural context that will serve as the focus of your project. What is the historical relevance of the context? How did the current culturally accepted forms of consumption behavior become established over time (if available)? For example, the sending of cards at Christmas time evolved from the practice of giving small, inexpensive favors to wish distant family, friends,

and acquaintances well over the holidays. Over time, this custom gave way (largely due to marketing influences from greeting card companies) to the more widespread use of holiday cards to acknowledge both business and personal relationships.

- Describe the potential for consumption-related decision making given the cultural context in question. Provide examples of the purchases that might be involved for consumers participating in this context. For example, a high school prom provides the opportunity for the consumption of apparel, cosmetics, jewelry, personal care services, limousine services, and meals.
- What is the meaning of consumption as it relates to the cultural context you've chosen? To answer this question, apply the consumption typology described in your text.
- Are marketers manipulating consumer behavior relative to the context in question? Why or why not? Provide examples to support your position. For instance, some say that Christmas is too commercialized with Christian children unlikely to acknowledge the religious underpinnings of the holiday due to their obsession with gifts. One way to provide support for this position is to compare the number of gift-related messages to the number of messages related to the larger meaning of the holiday.
- How were consumers socialized to the cultural expectations surrounding the context? In other words, how did consumers learn what behaviors (purchase behaviors and others) were expected of them?
- Develop an associative network for the context.
- Are consumers responding to needs or wants when they make consumption decisions related to the cultural context in question? Explain. What motivational conflicts do consumers wrestle with relative to this context?
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs emphasizes that only an unsatisfied need motivates. Likewise, many decisions can be motivated by the different need levels, depending on the person. For example, one consumer may choose to shop at Whole Foods because of the esteem associated with shopping at an upscale market, while another may shop at Whole Foods because of her need for the safety of organic foods. Assess the levels of Maslow's hierarchy that may be motivating consumption behaviors related to this cultural context.
- Identify the instrumental and terminal values expressed through consumer behavior surrounding the context. For example, young women may use consumption of products for a prom as a way of feeling pretty and popular (instrumental values), but ultimately seek happiness (terminal value).
- Assess the situational aspects affecting consumer behavior in this cultural context. Include analysis of the antecedent states and purchase environment (you do not need to evaluate the postpurchase processes for this project).
- Describe the reference groups that may be affecting consumers relative to this cultural context and provide examples. Is the influence from reference groups informative, utilitarian, or value-expressive? Explain. Does social comparison theory play a role in consumer behavior? Explain.

- Apply the family life-cycle model to the cultural context. How do consumption behaviors vary according to stage? Provide examples to support your assessment.
- How might various subcultural components affect individual consumer behavior? Include a discussion of age, income, social class, money personalities, and consumer confidence.
- What are the status symbols associated with this cultural context? Explain and provide examples.
- What myths and rituals (including gift giving) are associated with this cultural context? Provide examples.

Conclude your paper with an assessment of the sources of influence on consumer behavior for this specific context. Do you expect to see changes in the future? Why or why not? How has your view of the cultural context changed as a result of your analysis? (A 20-page paper is required.)

***In-depth Interview:*** Also, in teams of three or four, students will conduct in-depth interviews with consumers to understand consumers' experiences as they relate to the topics suggested for the group project. In class, we will discuss experiential interviewing, get some practice, and go over additional specifics of the assignment. More information will be provided before arrival at each port of call.

### **Attendance:**

Attendance is expected. Any changes to the course schedule will be announced in class and it is your responsibility to make sure that you are aware of any such changes. Naturally, attendance has an impact on the student's class participation grade. If student misses a class, it is his or her responsibility to get lecture notes from a classmate. Any students missing more than two classes will receive a grade reduction. Each absence beyond three will result in a half-letter grade drop in your final grade for the course. Students should plan wisely. Two tardies is equivalent to a missed class. Thus, govern yourself accordingly and use your absences wisely.

### **Class Participation:**

We will discuss the readings in the text, articles, web sites, and on-site visits in detail each class, so come to class prepared. You are encouraged to ask questions during class over things you feel need clarification, or to make comments based on your own experiences. Don't hesitate to ask me to slow down, or to repeat or restate concepts you find confusing. Any contributions you wish to make during class are encouraged. You are expected to actively participate in class by asking questions and sharing personal experiences. Class participation is expected (it's part of your grade). Perfect attendance will earn you a participation grade of 80%. You will gain 5 points for each meaningful contribution to class discussion. Conversely, you will lose 5 points each time you miss class, are tardy, or are grossly unprepared. Also, all homework assignments are included in the calculation of the class participation grade.

### **Honor Code:**

Students will adhere to the University of Virginia Honor Code as noted in the Voyager's Handbook.

### **Behavior Guidelines:**

- All work presented will be that of the student alone. Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and may be punished by failure on an exam or assignment or failure in the course.
- Arrive to class on time. This course is to aid in your development of skills you will need when you are employed in a professional capacity.
- Sleeping. How long do you think you'll last in that job you been waiting for if you sleep through your boss's meeting? Get a good night's rest before class.
- If you have a question, raise your hand and share it with all of us. Others may have the same question but are too shy to ask. Surfing the internet, using email, or instant messaging will not be tolerated in class.
- The beginning of maturity is taking responsibility for your actions

### **Other:**

- Always come to class on time. Missed tests or quizzes due to tardiness will not be allowed to be made up. Two tardies are the equivalent of one absence.
- I am always willing to see students and will go out of my way to schedule meetings. Please make sure that if you make an appointment that you keep it and be on time.
- If, for any reason, I cannot make it to class or cannot get it covered by another instructor, I will make sure that a notice is posted in the classroom. Furthermore, I will attempt to post it on blackboard and/or email you to hopefully prevent an unnecessary trip to campus. I sincerely hope this will not happen.
- All examinations are required and no make-ups will be allowed. Likewise, no incompletes are given.
- Do not send me long emails concerning grades. Please set up an appointment and meet with me. Also, come to this meeting prepared.

### **Tentative Course Outline**

<b>Day</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignments</b>
Day 1	Introduction and Administration	
Day 2	Chapter 1 (Introduction: Consumers in the Marketplace)	Groups Assigned
Break (Hawaii -2)		
Day 3	Chapter 14 (Culture)	Countries Assigned
Day 4	Chapter 13 (Subcultures)	
Study Day		
Day 5	Chapter 2 (Perception)	



Day 6	Chapter 2 (Perception)	
Break (Japan – 5)		
Day 7	Chapter 3 (Learning and Memory)	Country Profiles Due
Break (China – 6)		
Day 8	Chapter 3 (Learning and Memory)	Country Profile (China Presentation)
<b>Day 9</b>	<b>Chapters (1-3, 13, 14)</b>	<b>Exam 1</b>
Break (Vietnam – 7)		
Day 10	Chapter 4 (Motivation and Global Values)	Country Profile (Vietnam Presentation)
Break (Singapore – 7)		
Day 11	Chapter 5 (The Self)	Country Profile (Singapore Presentation)
Day 12	Chapter 6 (Personality and Psychographics)	Consumption Journal Due
Break (India – 6)		
Day 13	Chapter 7 (Attitudes and Persuasion)	Country Profile (India Presentation)
Study Day		
Day 14	Chapter 8 (Decision Making)	Field Lab Paper Due
<b>Day 15</b>	<b>Chapters (4-8)</b>	<b>Exam 2</b>
Break (Port Louis – 1)		
Day 16	Chapter 9 (Buying and Disposing)	Country Profile (Port Louis Presentation)
Study Day		
Day 17	Chapter 10 (Organizational and Household Decision Making)	
Break (South Africa – 6)		
Day 18	Chapter 11 (Groups and Social Media)	Country Profile (South Africa Presentation)
Study Day		
Day 19	Chapter 12 (Social Class and Lifestyles)	Consumption Journal Due
<b>Day 20</b>	<b>Chapters (9-12)</b>	<b>Exam 3</b>
Break (Ghana – 4)		
Day 21		Country Profile (Ghana Presentation)
Day 22		Group Projects Due & Presentation
Study Day		
Day 23		Group Project Presentations Final Consumption Journal Due
Study Day		
Study Day		
Break (Casablanca – 4)		
Day 24		Group Project Presentations
Convocation		
Arrive Barcelona		

*The professor reserves the right to change any portion of this syllabus at any time. All students will be notified of changes in class, by email, and/or electronically.*

## Appendix A

### Sample Journal Entry (Ross & Williams 1997)

**Date:** June 8, 1996

**Place of Purchase:** Walgreens

**Item Purchased:** Lipsticks (7) tubes

**Brand Name:** DCA No 12 (Designer Classic Alternatives)

**Price:** \$4.50 each X 7 = #31.50

**Reason for Purchase:** I have been looking for this specific color for the past month. I saw the color and realized it was a remake of Estee Lauder but without the high price. So I actually got 7 tubes of lipstick for the price of two tubes from Estee Lauder.

**Feeling Associated with the Purchase:** I feel great. I feel that I actually beat the system. After finding out that lipstick only cost about 15 cents to make and consumers are really paying for the packaging and name I have vowed never to pay \$14 or \$15 dollars again for lipstick.

## Appendix B

### Sample 10 Product List (Ross & Williams 1997)

- 1) **Eastpack Backpack:** navy blue canvas. I use this product every day to carry my books and other supplies. It says about me that I am a student who likes to be organized and prepared by keeping my belongings together.
- 2) **Pantene Shampoo:** for normal hair, wash my hair every morning with Pantene because it has a good reputation for keeping hair healthy. I buy it at Albertson's. As a young lady hygiene and cleanliness are important.
- 3) **Blue Bell Ice Cream:** homemade vanilla flavor buy a small carton once a week and eat some a few nights a week vanilla flavor choice says I'm an old fashioned "plain Jane" but the kid in me likes to enjoy simple good things like ice cream on a summer night.
- 4) **Red Dress:** by "Studio" from Dillard's size 3. Although I've only worn it once, it is my favorite dress for special occasions. Its simplicity says about me that I'm conservative and "ladylike" but the red color says that I'm classy and sassy too.

## **Appendix C**

### **Sample Advertisement Analysis (Condensed) (Ross & Williams 1997)**

In the Nike advertisement, the main consumer behavior concept that is used is modeling. A model is someone whose behavior is a person attempts to emulate. Certainly any woman would like to be a successful athlete like Jackie Joyner-Kersey. Although her picture in the ad is not the most prominent thing, an entire page is devoted to her. The text on the page says that “she has a goal,” and a second consumer behavior principle is used here, attribution theory. In attribution theory, people attempt to determine whether the cause for action results from something internal or external. In this ad Nike is saying (or wanting us to believe) that the cause of Jackie Joyner-Kersey’s success in athletics is that she wears Nike shoes. A third consumer behavior principle that is used in this ad is the image congruence hypothesis. Nike seems to be appealing to those who see themselves as very determined to succeed at very tough physical feats. Though not everyone wants to win the heptathlon the image of the shoe that this ad portrays seems to be directed at any woman who wishes to succeed at what she does even if it is not purely physical activity.