



Fall 2023
MKTG 312 – Consumer Behavior
M 2:00-4:40 PM

GENERAL INFORMATION:

Instructor: Dr. Vias C. Nicolaidis

Office: G 669

E-mail: vnicolai@gmu.edu

Office Hours: T-TH 4-5 PM

Classroom: G305

COURSE PREREQUISITES: C or higher in MKTG 301, 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 do so, we will follow a scientist-practitioner approach where we will be working on research projects. To be a skilled marketer you need to understand your consumers and why they behave as they do and scientific research accomplishes that. 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)

RECOMMENDED TEXTBOOK: *Consumer Behavior: Building Marketing Strategy, 14th ed.*, Mothersbaugh & Hawkins, McGraw-Hill, 2020

Class GRADING:

Midterm Exam	100 points
Team Research Project Report	100 points
Team Research Project Presentation	64 points
Peer Evaluation	20 points
Assignments	80 points

Total Points: 364 points

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.

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, 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 and Assignments (80 points): 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.

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 (both online and in-person).

- 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.

Team Research Project Report (100 Points) and Presentation (64 points): Throughout this course, you'll dive into a blend of theory and hands-on experience. Detailed project information will be provided at the start of the semester through Blackboard. This team project is designed to enhance your applied research skills and give you a taste of market research and analysis. We'll be focusing on studying consumer behavior in a real-world context. Teams of 3-5 students will be formed based on class size and assigned randomly. This project is all about thorough investigation where you will choose a specific aspect of consumer behavior to study scientifically. This involves building a solid theoretical framework, collecting data on key factors, analyzing the data, and drawing meaningful conclusions. Your final presentation will showcase your findings and insights. Additionally, students will turn in a professional research project report of their work.

In executing your project, you will select your key variables of interest (both dependent and independent), find measurement tools to measure them, collect data, analyze data, form conclusions, develop recommendations, and present your findings to the class at the end of the semester. The presentation must use Powerpoint, be 15-20 minutes long, and include other supporting material. The presentation should present the results of your research and your recommendations. 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.

** **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. At the end of the semester, all team members will evaluate all other team members. Ratings will be considered to penalize social loafing and lack of participation and contribution.**

Midterm Exam (100 points): There will be one exam this semester around the middle of the semester. The exam will be administered and taken online, synchronously, on Blackboard. More information about the exams will be announced in class. 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.

Attendance & Participation Policy: *Participation (and therefore, attendance) is required.* 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 not acceptable. Arriving late or leaving early, without prior permission from me, will negatively affect your grade.

*Class participation (in-class **and** on Blackboard) is a requirement for this course.* Simply attending class is not enough to earn maximum participation points.

Your final grade for the course will be converted from 364 points to 1000 points and the following percentages will correspond to your final grade:

Percentage	Letter Grade	Grade Points
970 and above	A+	4.0
940 – 969 points	A	4.0
900 – 939 points	A-	3.7
870 – 899 points	B+	3.3
840 – 869 points	B	3.0
800 – 839 points	B-	2.7
770 – 799 points	C+	2.3
730 – 769 points	C	2.0
700 – 729 points	C-	1.7
600 – 699 points	D	1.0
Below 600 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.

♦ **Deadlines:** All deadlines are final. Assignments submitted after the deadline will be considered late and will be subject to a 10% per day penalty if there is adequate justification.

My Accessibility: I look forward to getting to know as many of you as possible during the summer session. 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. 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. You can always reach me at vnicolai@gmu.edu and I am also open to Zoom and in-person meetings at a moment's notice.

Additional Course and University Policies

- **Gender Identity and Pronoun Use:** if you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with us and how best to address you in class and via email. You can update your chosen name and pronouns here.
- **Disability Services** at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first email and inform Academic Affairs (mkfa@gmu.edu). Feel free to visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. It is your responsibility to email your accommodation letter to your professor.
- **Inclusion:** George Mason University, an intentionally inclusive community, promotes and maintains an equitable and just work and learning environment. We welcome and value individuals and their differences including race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability. As a member of the George Mason University, Korea community, the School of Business plays an integral role in building an educational environment that is committed to antiracism and inclusive excellence. For more information on how to continuously cultivate the practice of anti-racism, see this guide from the National Museum of African American History and Culture on how to be anti-racist: <https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-aboutrace/topics/being-antiracist>.
- **Academic Integrity.** The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another

person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles, such as parenthetical citation, footnotes, or endnotes. Paraphrased material must also be cited, using the appropriate format for this class. A simple listing of books or articles is not sufficient. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please see me.

- **Title IX:** As a faculty member and designated “Responsible Employee,” I am required to report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason’s Title IX Coordinator per university policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please seek assistance from Mason’s Title IX Coordinator (dzimmer2@gmu.edu).

- **Grade Appeals.** If you have a concern about a grade on an assignment, you must submit a written appeal to me within one week of receiving the grade in question. The appeal should outline your specific concerns with the grade along with evidence supporting why it should be changed. I will then review your appeal and respond as quickly as possible.

- **Email use.** Students must use their MasonLive email account to receive important University information, including communications related to this class.

- **Recordings.** Some meetings in this class will be recorded to provide necessary information for students in this class. Recordings will be stored on Blackboard and will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester. Videorecordings — whether made by instructors or students — of class meetings that include audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private and must not be shared outside the class.

- **Technology.** Activities and assignments in this course will regularly use the Blackboard learning system, available at <https://mymason.gmu.edu>. Students are required to have regular, reliable access to a computer with an updated operating system (recommended: Windows 10 or Mac OSX 10.13 or higher) and a stable broadband Internet connection (cable modem, DSL, satellite broadband, etc., with a consistent 1.5 Mbps [megabits per second] download speed or higher.)

**** 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.

Tentative Class Schedule

Date	Topic
21/8	Intro to the Course and Syllabus Review
28/8	Introduction and Fundamentals of Consumer Behavior
4/9	Consumer Perception
11/9	Principles of Persuasion in Consumer Behavior
18/9	Research Methods in Consumer Behavior
25/9	Levels of Measurement
2/10	Psychographics, Attitudes, Culture, and Values in Consumer Behavior
9/10	Consumer Behavior Statistical Analysis in SPSS
16/10	Research Project Methodology and Analysis Plan
23/10	Experiential Learning Activity & Data Collection
30/10	Exam on Blackboard at 2PM
6/11	Market Segmentation and Real Life Bidding
13/11	Team Data Collection Analysis in SPSS
20/11	Team Data Analysis in SPSS & Meeting with Dr. V & Feedback
27/11	Class Summary and Take-Away Lessons and Reflections
4/12	Reading Day
TBA	Final Exam Day: Presentations