

York University  
**CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: 3210 A**  
**Fall 2019**

**Course Instructor:**  
Prof. Pallavi Sodhi  
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**Class meets:**  
Wednesdays 4-7pm

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

Consumer behavior is all about understanding why people buy things and how products, services and consumption activities contribute to shaping people's social experiences. Consumers as the "shopping audience" are critical to shaping marketing strategy. We have to understand why people behave as they do, so we can identify their needs, and then satisfy them. This behaviour is important to marketers, policy makers, academia, and consumers alike.

Marketers can develop an effective marketing mix if they are more knowledgeable about their target consumers. Only once they understand how consumers behave, can they predict how they will react to marketing—be it advertising, new product development, sales approaches, or the management of customer relationships.

Policy makers benefit from consumer behavior research because it serves as a crucial insight into initiating change. Policy makers often try to change unhealthy consumption behaviors, like smoking, binge eating, and gambling. A better understanding of the reasons behind such behavior may help stem or prevent such behavior from occurring.

For academia, the study of consumer behaviour provides new insights into understanding the motivations behind buying and using products and services, the processes involved, and the consequences of decision-making, which they can then impart as learning to corporates and budding marketers.

Most importantly, the study of consumer behavior is important for each one of us as consumers. How possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and each other, especially in this world of social media and the digital age is mind-boggling. Consciously or sub-consciously, we are embroiled in consumer activities, whether exposed to advertising, or when shopping in stores, when wearing a specific brand of clothes, or choosing a preferred mode of communication. When we, as consumers dig deeper to studying this complex consumer behavior, we gain a wealth of knowledge about why we behave the way we do.

**REQUIRED COURSE TEXT / READINGS:**

Solomon, M., White, K., & Dahl, D. (2016). *Consumer Behaviour: Buying, Having, and Being*, 7<sup>th</sup> Canadian ed. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

The textbook will be supplemented by articles, magazine and electronic readings, marketing updates, and case study material which will be posted/ provided by me as the course progresses. Students are expected to check the course website regularly.

**WEIGHTING OF COURSE:**

<b>Evaluation Element</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>Weight</b>
Participation and in-class exercises	Ongoing	10
Exams (Midterm: 30% and Final: 20%)	Class 5 & 10	50
Group project (written report & presentation)	Class 11 & 12	40
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

## COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- Understand the fundamental theories of consumer behavior
- Appreciate how having (or not having) things affects our lives and how our possessions influence the way we feel about ourselves and each other
- Develop consumer insights to help formulate marketing strategy from real-world marketing cases

## PARTICIPATION AND IN-CLASS EXERCISES:

Students are encouraged to speak up in class and share the current trends or developments in the marketing world that hold relevance to consumer behavior. Sharing your thoughts, questions, ideas and issues is a good way to raise the level of knowledge of everyone. The format of this class is such that learning would be a function of the level of class participation. I would like you all to actively participate in the class, ask questions, and also cite your own experiences.

Discussing the questions at the end of the chapters in the textbook enhance the learning experience. Each week, relevant questions will be discussed and facilitated in class by students/groups selected on an adhoc basis.

**Adequate preparation for the class, regular attendance and full involvement in the class is expected. Please come on time and use name cards** to identify yourself for all class sessions. Class participation grade will be based on my perception of your performance on the above requirements. The evaluation would be subjective hence you will have to live with my judgment on this. You will get good grades if you contribute to the overall learning of the class. If the participation becomes counterproductive (or you just speak because you want to get noticed, with nothing to add to the discussion) will get you negative grades.

This individual evaluation element of your grade will be a function of your individual participation in class discussions, as well as completing a series of in-class exercises. **Marks are not awarded for attendance.** But being absent will hurt your contribution as you cannot participate or complete in-class exercises if you don't show up. **So be there AND be aware!**

To earn **individual participation** marks, worth 5% of your grade:

- Observe the 4 P's: *Presence, Punctuality, Preparation and Participation*
- Demonstrate initiative by sharing current news or personal examples that relevant to the topic of study
- Be respectful to others
- **Display your name card at every class**

In addition, throughout the semester, I may administer without prior warning, surprise quizzes or in-class short assignments. Quizzes will be short (approx.10 minutes), based on course readings, class discussions or ideas generated in class. These quizzes are intended to test your applied knowledge. These in-class exercises/ pop quizzes will be worth 5% of your grade. You will not be notified of these ahead of time, and they do not require prior preparation. The only way to ensure you do not miss these exercises, be there and be aware!

These quizzes are NOT compulsory...they are however an asset for marks. At the end of the quizzes, if you want me to count the quiz, hand it in. If you don't wish to, do not hand it in. I will only count those submissions I receive. If you submit multiple contributions, I will take the average marks. If you decide not to submit any of the pop quizzes, I will only count your in-class

participation, the marks of which will be based on my perception of your performance on the requirements highlighted in yellow. Such an evaluation would be subjective hence you will have to live with my judgment on this.

## **TEST/EXAM**

### ***Mid-term Test (30%) and Final Examination (20%)***

Both the mid-term and final examinations will be of closed book format. The midterm will cover chapters 1-8 and will be worth 30% of your final grade; the Final Exam will cover chapters 9-15 and will be worth 20% of your final grade. Each may include multiple choice, and short answer questions. The exams will assess your understanding of the course material through questions based on the course material and would involve application of the material taught in class. Missed exams will be graded as zero. In exceptional circumstances, make-up exams will be offered for students who provide a valid excuse for their absence *prior to the exam*. Any request for a make-up exam on medical grounds must include an “Attending Physician’s Statement” form (<http://www.yorku.ca/laps/council/students/documents/APS.pdf>).

## **GROUP PROJECT:**

The group project is an important aspect of this course as it allows you to demonstrate what you’ve learned in a creative way. To do this, your group will need to identify a marketing issue in which consumer behavior plays a critical role. The issue must have real-world implications. The issue can be specific to a certain product or company (e.g., how will consumers react to the Burger King/Tim Horton’s merger?) or be a more general consumer behavior topic (e.g., how can policy makers help curb overspending?). This project will be further detailed in class during **the 2<sup>nd</sup> lecture**.

The development of a project forms the “thesis” and the key practical component of the course which will include demographics and psychographics that measure observable aspects of a specific target population. Understanding your target customer goes a long way in developing healthy relationships with them. Marketers leverage this relationship marketing by first doing ethnography research, tracking behavioural patterns and doing database marketing.

All students must complete a major group project due at the end of the semester. This project will provide you with the opportunity to:

- Examine a real-world consumer behavior issue and/or problem
- Apply some of the theoretical concepts and knowledge you have acquired in the course
- Design, conduct, and analyze your own primary consumer research
- Apply secondary research to find insights pertinent to your case
- Combine your analytical and creative skills to suggest a potential marketing solution

Students, in teams, will select a real-world marketing issue in which consumer behaviour plays a critical role. This may be a challenge facing a company that you are familiar with, or a company that has been in the news and/or captivated your interest. If the latter, you can acquire information by researching potential sources, the news, business publications, and/or other media outlets. Always remember, the YorkU Libraries have a wealth of information to help you as well. A word of advice: The more specific you articulate the consumer problem, the better and more insightful your analysis and hence your proposed solutions will be. You will need to submit a project proposal with a group contract and get my approval to proceed on the topic before actually commencing on your project.

In brief, your task is to **(a) diagnose a key consumer-behaviour related issue** and **(b) develop recommendations and suggestions** for addressing the problem. To diagnose the key issue(s), you will be expected to conduct a literature review (i.e., examine published material to understand what has already been said<sup>1</sup>), and to **conduct your own primary research**.

**TENTATIVE LECTURE SCHEDULE:** The following is a general tentative outline of the course content. The actual dates and sequence of topics covered in specific sessions may vary somewhat depending on the progress of the class.

<b>CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR</b> <b>Course Instructor: Professor Pallavi Sodhi</b> <b>psodhi@yorku.ca</b> <b>Detailed Course Outline – Tentative Schedule</b>		
<b>DATE/WEEK</b>	<b>TOPIC(S)</b>	<b>TEXT, RESOURCES, ASSIGNMENTS</b>
Class 1 Sep 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Course Structure and grading overview.</li> <li>- Introduction to Consumer Behaviour</li> <li>- Perception</li> </ul>	Chapters 1 and 2 An Experiential In-class Exercise
Class 2 Sep 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Learning and Memory</li> <li>- Motivation and Affect</li> <li>- GROUP WORK SESSION</li> </ul>	Chapters 3, 4 + Lecture Notes <a href="#">Group Project Briefing</a>
Class 3 Sep 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Self</li> <li>- Personality, Lifestyles and Values</li> </ul>	Chapter 5, 6 Group Proposals and Contracts due Case Study, Brand Video
Class 4 Sep 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attitudes</li> <li>- Attitude Change and Communications</li> </ul>	Chapter 7, 8 Briefing for midterm test
Class 5 Oct 2	<b>MIDTERM TEST</b>	<b>Test syllabus (Chapters 1-8)</b>
Class 6 Oct 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Individual decision making</li> <li>- Buying and Disposing</li> </ul>	Chapters 9-10 Case Study Analysis
Oct 16	<b>READING WEEK. NO CLASS.</b>	
Class 7 Oct 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group Influence and Social media</li> <li>- Income, Social Class, and Family Structure</li> </ul>	Chapters 11-12 <b>POTENTIAL GUEST SPEAKER</b>

<sup>1</sup>Potential sources include (but are not limited to) books, magazines (e.g., *Business Week*, *The Economist*, *Wired*), academic journals (e.g., *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Psychology*), news outlets, and corporate communications (e.g., financial reports, online information kits).

Class 8 Oct 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Subcultures</li> <li>- Cultural Influences on Consumer Behaviour</li> </ul>	Chapters 13-14 International Case Studies
Class 9 Nov 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Creation and Diffusion of Culture</li> <li>- Final Exam and Project Briefing</li> </ul>	Chapter 15
Class 10 Nov 13	<b>FINAL EXAM</b>	<b>Final Exam Syllabus: Chapters 9 -15</b>
Class 11 Nov 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group Presentations (A)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Written Report by all groups DUE prior to start of class.</b></p> <p>All groups are required to attend regardless of their turn to present. Groups will be awarded marks for participation as well as presentation.</p> <p>Peer Evaluations will be held in Class</p>
Class 12 Nov 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group Presentations (B)</li> </ul>	<p>All groups required to attend regardless of their turn to present. Groups will be awarded marks for participation as well as presentation.</p> <p>Peer Evaluations will be held in Class</p>

## APPENDIX

### Other Course Policies

#### ***Email Etiquette***

Please use your yorku.ca email address, and list the course code and section in the subject line (e.g., ADMS3210 A). I will do my best to respond to your emails within one business day. Also, keep in mind that some questions are much easier to respond to in-person.

#### ***Food and Drink***

Beverages are fine. Food is fine as long as it's not very smelly or noisy. Please pick up after yourself.

#### ***Grades***

If you have any concerns about your grade on a specific assignment, I am happy to discuss it with you; however, please adhere to the **24/7 Policy**:

- Wait at least 24 hours from the time I hand back the assignment/exam
- Appeal within 7 days from the time I hand back the assignment/exam
- State your concerns in writing, citing specific reasons
- Come talk to me about it. Please request an appointment via email. I do not have office hours, so will accommodate before or after class hours in a pre-assigned office in one of the Administration rooms in the Atkinson building.

#### ***Laptops and Recording***

Laptops and tablets are permitted in class—as long as they do not disrupt the class. Please turn all electronics on silent when you enter the class!

Recording and photography is not allowed in this class as I will be sharing some proprietary case studies.

#### ***Late Work***

Late work will not be accepted, unless the student has provided me with a valid excuse *prior to the due date*, and I have offered an extension.

#### ***Name Cards***

Write your name on a tent card, and bring it to all classes! If you forget one day, please free-style a new one.

#### ***Schedule Changes***

If there are any changes in the class schedule, I will try to give you as much notice as possible. Please check Moodle/course websites for any class announcements.

## Relevant University Regulations

### ***Deferred Standing***

Deferred standing may be granted to students who are unable to write their final examination at the scheduled time or to submit their outstanding course work on the last day of classes. In order to apply for deferred standing, students must complete a Deferred Standing Agreement (DSA) form and submit their request no later than five (5) business days from the date of the exam. The request must be properly submitted with supporting documentation directly to the main office of the School of Administrative Studies (282 Atkinson), NOT to the Course Director.

These requests will be considered on their merit and decisions will be made on a case per case basis. Students can check the status of their request by contacting SAS main office. Students with approved DSA will be able to write their deferred examination during the School's deferred examination period. No further extensions of deferred exams shall be granted. The format and covered content of the deferred examination may be different from that of the originally scheduled examination. The deferred exam may be closed book, cumulative and comprehensive and may include all subjects/topics of the textbook whether they have been covered in class or not. Any request for deferred standing on medical grounds just include an Attending Physician's Statement form; a "Doctor's Note" will not be accepted.  
DSA Form: [http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/deferred\\_standing\\_agreement.pdf](http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/pdf/deferred_standing_agreement.pdf)

Attending Physician's Statement form:

<http://www.yorku.ca/laps/council/students/documents/APS.pdf>

### ***Academic Honesty***

The Policy on Academic Honesty is an affirmation and clarification for members of the University of the general obligation to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty. As a clear sense of academic honesty and responsibility is fundamental to good scholarship, the policy recognizes the general responsibility of all faculty members to foster acceptable standards of academic conduct and of the student to be mindful of and abide by such standards. Suspected breaches of academic honesty will be investigated and charges shall be laid if reasonable and probable grounds exist.

Students should review the York Academic Honesty policy for themselves at:

<http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/policies/document.php?document=69>

Students might also wish to review the interactive online tutorial for students on academic integrity at: [http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic\\_integrity/](http://www.yorku.ca/tutorial/academic_integrity/)

Students must be aware of their rights and responsibilities, for more detail please visit:

<http://www.yorku.ca/laps/students/rights.html>

### ***Reappraisals***

Students may, with sufficient academic grounds, request that a final grade in a course be reappraised (which may mean the review of specific pieces of tangible work). Non-academic grounds are not relevant for grade reappraisals; in such cases, students are advised to petition to their home Faculty. Students are normally expected to first contact the course director to discuss the grade received and to request that their tangible work be reviewed. Tangible work may include written, graphic, digitized, modeled, video recording or audio recording formats, but not oral work. Students need to be aware that a request for a grade reappraisal may result in the original grade being raised, lowered or confirmed. For reappraisal procedures and information, please visit the Office of the Registrar site at:  
<http://www.registrar.yorku.ca/grades/reappraisal/index.htm>

**Religious Accommodation**

York University is committed to respecting the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the community, and making accommodations for observances of special significance to adherents. For more information on religious accommodation, please visit <https://w2prod.sis.yorku.ca/Apps/WebObjects/cdm.woa/wa/regobs>

**Course Withdrawal**

Last day to drop the course without receiving a grade is xxx.

If you withdraw between xxx and the end of classes (yyy), the course remains on your transcript without a grade and is notated as “W”.

**Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

The nature and extent of accommodations shall be consistent with and supportive of the integrity of the curriculum and of the academic standards of programs or courses. Provided that students have given sufficient notice about their accommodation needs, instructors shall take reasonable steps to accommodate these needs in a manner consistent with the guidelines established hereunder. For more information please visit the Disabilities Services website at <http://www.yorku.ca/dshub/>

York’s disabilities offices and the Registrar’s Office work in partnership to support alternate exam and test accommodation services for students with disabilities at the Keele campus. For more information on alternate exams and tests please visit <http://www.yorku.ca/altexams/>

Please alert the Course Director as soon as possible should you require special accommodation.