Perspectives on Consumer Behavior (MAR7507)
(Mondays from 3:00 – 6:30 in 267 Stuzin Conference Room)

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Purpose of the Course

This course will introduce you to topics in consumer research. The class will provide breadth (expose you to a variety of consumer behavior topics) and depth (require you to do a detailed investigation of three topics) training.

The breadth objective will be achieved through our weekly class meetings. To be a student of consumer behavior, one must know about the theories that inform the literature. Therefore, one half of the course will focus on providing you with a theoretical background. In a typical session, the first 1 1/2 hours will be spent discussing competing theoretical approaches. The remainder of the session will be spent discussing papers from the consumer research literature. The goal is to help you understand (1) how basic social science research and consumer research differ, (2) how theories and concepts are applied, adapted, constrained, and combined when applied to consumer issues, and (3) how research streams evolve over time. The other half of the course will consist of student led discussions of papers. These discussions will allow you to internalize the concepts that were introduced in the theoretical background sessions.

The depth objective will be accomplished through independent reading. Each student will be asked to submit two unique 8-15 page research proposals. Each proposal has to be on a unique topic (i.e., you cannot do the same topic twice). You should investigate literatures you find interesting.

Weekly Readings

Students are asked to read three or four papers each week. There are three types of readings.

1. A background reading consisting of a cognitive or social psychology text chapter or a review article. These readings provide a good introduction to the topic and are useful if you have no background in the area. If you have the time, you should read these prior to reading the assigned readings.

2. One to three articles from the social sciences. These articles represent the dominant theories that have been used in consumer research. Often, I discuss only a portion of the article in my lecture. Although these papers are informative, students that do not have an intrinsic interest in the area often find these papers difficult to read. (Note: These types of papers are often read when one is developing a research proposal.)

3. Three to six articles from the consumer behavior literature. These articles represent the
discipline’s efforts to generate knowledge. We will spend 15-60 minutes discussing each article. The articles are listed in the syllabus in the order I will discuss them. I have marked the articles according to the amount of time I will spend discussing them (A = most, C = least).

Leading Discussions
Some sessions will consist of discussion (no lecture). To facilitate class discussion, I will assign teams of two to three students to be discussion leaders. The goal is to improve your ability to critique an article, generate research ideas, and improve the ideas through discussion with your peers. I prefer that discussion leaders use no Powerpoint slides or types material (though there will be cases where a one-page handout is useful). Guidelines for critiquing an article are at the back of this document. REMEMBER, YOUR GOAL IS TO LEAD A DISCUSSION, NOT PROVIDE ALL OF THE ANSWERS.

Please note that leading the discussion of an article is a skill, just like any other skill. Thus, I WILL intervene and assist the first few times you lead a discussion. I will be less intrusive as the semester progresses.

Copying
I have sent the materials for the first meeting (August 21) via e-mail. I will give you readings for the semester during a later class.

Proposals (Due on Oct. 20 and Dec. 01).
I have attached a sample research proposal.
   a. You can do research proposals on topics that interest you. Research proposals do not have to be on topics discussed in the course.
   b. Each research proposal must be on a unique topic. You cannot revise a research proposal one and submit it as proposal two.
   c. A research proposal must contain a hypothesized interaction and two-factor experiment (or something more complex). Proposals can include more than one experiment (I encourage it).
   d. The sample proposal (provided) discusses additional formatting and reporting requirements.
   e. You are allowed to discuss your proposal ideas with me. The only downside to this activity is I have limited insight into what is valued in your discipline (I may redirect your efforts and frustrate you).

Grades

Grades are based on participation (40%) and research proposals (30% per proposal).
**READINGS**

**Week 1: Background Skills (8/21/17)**

This class will provide an overview of some of the basic skills you will need for the course. Read the research chapter and critique the Zhou et al. (2009) paper.


Janiszewski, Chris, Aparna A Labroo, and Derek D. Rucker (2016), “A Tutorial in Consumer Research: Knowledge Creation and Knowledge Appreciation in Deductive-Conceptual Consumer Research,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43 (October), forthcoming (This will not be discussed, but it is a useful resource for developing proposals).


**Week 2: Breadth of Consumer Research / Approaches to Research (9/14/17 or 9/15/17)**


**Week 3: Information Processing Models / Influence of Involvement on Processing (9/18/17)**


Consumer Research, 10 (September), 135-146. (A)


**Week 4: Consequences of Exposure (9/25/17)**


**Week 5: Conditioning and Learning Theory (10/02/17)**


Week 6: Judgment (10/09/17)


Week 7: Experience, Happiness, and Well-being (10/16/17) (Discussion Week)

Hsee, Chris K., Yang Yang, Naihe Li, and Luxi Shen (2009), “Wealth, Warmth and Wellbeing: Whether Happiness is Relative or Absolute Depends on whether it is about Money, Acquisition, or Consumption,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46 (June), 396-409.
Week 8: Knowledge Accessibility (10/23/17)


Week 9: Perspectives on Choice (10/30/17) (Discussion Week)


Week 10: Regulatory Behavior (11/06/17) (Discussion Week)


**Week 11: Brands (11/13/17) (Discussion Week)**


**Week 12: Emotions (11/20/17) (Discussion Week)**


**Week 13: Automatic Social Behavior (11/27/17) (Discussion Week)**


**Week 14: Potpourri (12/04/17) (Discussion Week)**


Guidelines for Critiquing of a (Quantitative) Research Article
(Adapted from Louis Kruger, Northeastern University)

You should focus your critique on the important strengths and weaknesses of the article. The following suggestions on article review should be viewed as a guide and should not be followed in a “lock-step” manner (i.e., you may critique 25% of the suggested areas). Try to approach the article on two levels: (a) overall coherence, consistency and logic of the argument (i.e., Do people really behave in this way? Are the findings generalizable?); and (b) specific strengths and weaknesses (i.e., Is the evidence provided in the article convincing?). Use concrete examples as means of illustrating your points.

1. Introduction / Background / Literature Review - Are the goals of the research clearly stated? Does the research have important practical and / or theoretical relevance? Are rationales clearly stated? Has the literature been adequately reviewed? Is extraneous material included? Do the researchers critically evaluate previous relevant research and or do they merely summarize? Does the review provide a solid justification for the goals of the research? Is the theoretical context of the problem clearly conveyed? (10% of critique)

2. Are hypotheses clearly and succinctly stated? Are hypotheses logical extensions of the literature reviewed? Are the hypotheses consistent with the goals of the research? Are the hypotheses testable? (20% of critique)

3. Method, Design, & Procedure - Do instruments and overall design adequately reflect the variables to be investigated? Do researchers present convincing evidence that instruments are reliable and valid? Are there important defects in the overall design of the study? What factors (if any) might have biased the subjects’ behavior? (30% of Critique)

4. Analysis and Results - Are statistical procedures appropriate for the hypotheses? Were statistics used appropriately? Do you suspect that the researchers went on a “fishing trip”? Do you expect the researchers had different hypotheses when they started the project / designed the study? Do results clearly address each hypothesis? Do tables, figures, and the discussion of the results facilitate or obfuscate inferences about key hypothesis tests? (30% of Critique)

5. Conclusions and Implications - Are the conclusions justified by the results? Are statistically significant results practically significant? Do the researchers consider alternate explanations for the results (e.g., extraneous factors, competing theories)? Are practical and theoretical implications discussed (if both are relevant)? Are important implications neglected by the researchers? Are the limitations of the investigation addressed? Are future directions for research specified? (10% of Critique)