

SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND WORD OF MOUTH UGBA 167

PROFESSOR: RACHEL GERSHON (SHE/HER)

Email: rgershon@berkeley.edu

Dates: Wednesdays, 2:00pm – 3:59pm, C210 Cheit

Office Hours:

These will take place on Thursdays 3-4pm in my office (F510) unless noted otherwise.

If you are unavailable during this time, feel free to email me to set up a Zoom meeting!

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

A successful marketing strategy must be built around an understanding of consumer relationships and the forces that influence their decisions. Using lectures, examples from the real world, discussions, and in-class exercises, this course will build upon research in psychology, marketing, and other social sciences to help you understand why consumers act as they do. This course merges psychological theory with practical tactics to understand and leverage social factors in consumer behavior.

Specifically, completion of this course will provide you with:

- An understanding of psychological processes underlying social influence in marketing.
- Insight into how to communicate and build relationships with customers.
- Insight into the strategies that are most likely to reach, inform, and persuade consumers.

Schedule			
Date	Topic	Readings (before class)	Assignments (after class)
Week 1 Jan 17	Introduction to the course		Survey 1
Week 2 Jan 24	Types of Social Influence	“Identity Signaling, Social Influence and Social Contagion” “How you can get others to help climate change, live sustainably”	Survey 2
Week 3 Jan 31	Social Influence and Decisions	“Harnessing the Science of Persuasion”	
Week 4 Feb 7			Survey 3
Week 5 Feb 14	Guest Speaker Daniela Zhang - Brand Advocates and Influencers	TBD	Survey 4
Week 6 Feb 21	Non-marketer Sources of Influence	“TikTok made me buy it”	Survey 5

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Week 7 Feb 28	Guest Speaker: Courtney Damji - Content Strategy and SEO Consultant	TBD	Survey 6
Week 8 March 6	Customer Advocates	“What drives immediate and ongoing word of mouth?” “What Happens When Companies Pay Customers to Write Reviews”	Survey 7
Week 9 March 13	Customer relationships	“Why You Shouldn’t Engage with Customer Complaints on Twitter” “How to Keep Complaints from Spreading”	
Week 10 March 20	Group Project		Survey 8
SPRING BREAK			
Week 11 April 3	Crafting Content People Want to Share	“How to Seed Organic Marketing in a Video-First World” “How to create a content marketing strategy”	Survey 9
Week 12 April 10	Brand Communities 1	“Getting Brand Communities Right” “Turn Your Customers into Your Community”	
Week 13 April 17	Brand Communities 2	“When the Twitterverse turns on you”	Group Projects (paper and upload presentation) due April 23 at 10pm
Week 14 April 24	Presentations		Survey 10 Presentation evaluations and Group Member

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			evaluations
Week 15 May 1	Class wrap-up		Group Study Guide due May 2 at 10pm.
Final May 7, 2:30pm	Final will be posted on bCourses and can be taken at your leisure, but must be completed by this time		

Surveys (20%):

Throughout the course I will ask you to complete surveys online to help you to think through the material prior to participating in class, to poll you on your perspectives, and/or to generate data for classroom demonstrations. Generally, surveys are due **BY 10pm the Monday before class, unless indicated otherwise. Given the purpose of these surveys, late submissions and makeups are not possible.** These surveys are not graded; you receive credit for completing them (15% of your final grade), though if you do not fully complete it you will not receive credit. **You can miss one survey without penalty.** Thus, if you complete 9 of the 10 surveys on time you earn 100%, if you complete 6 on time you earn 87.5%, if you complete 5 on time you earn 75%, and so on.

Exam (25%):

You will take one final exam (25% of your final grade) which will consist of multiple-choice and short answer questions. The exam will be cumulative and open book. The final exam will be taken online and **must be completed by May 7th at 2:30pm.** If it is completed after that time, you will receive a 0%.

Class participation (5%) and In-class Application Exercises (20%): Come to class prepared to actively discuss and work with the concepts in the readings. Your goal is to make comments that significantly advance the class discussion. Quality is more important than quantity.

If you are absent, arrange beforehand for a classmate to take notes for you and inform you of any assignments. Please also follow up with your classmates afterwards to address anything you may have missed. We'll also have short exercises that involve examining real world behavior and applying things we've learned in class. These assignments will be given during class, and you may have time to work on them during class. If you are absent and inform me beforehand, you may submit the assignment the Friday after class by 10pm. It is your responsibility to stay on top of these assignments if you miss class.

Group Project (25%):

You will take part in a group project applying what we've learned in the course to help a real company make their initiatives succeed. We'll talk more about this over the course of the semester, but the project will involve working hands-on with a chosen client company to help their social initiatives catch on. It will involve researching the problem and the barriers to success, creating a strategic plan to overcome those barriers, and designing creative executions that achieve the strategic objectives. Each group will submit an audit of the existing problems and a proposal of how to address them. There will also be a final presentation where you present your strategies to the class.

Each group member will be asked to evaluate the contributions of the other members to the group project via an online survey (as part of your weekly survey). Your group members' evaluations of your contribution will determine **5%** of your final grade. If you do not complete the survey yourself, you automatically receive 0 points for the Group Member Evaluation.

Requirement	Weight	Due
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Participation	5%	During Class
In-Class Activities	20%	During Class
Surveys	20%	Due Mondays before class at 10pm PST
Group Project	25%	Due April 23 at 10pm PST
Group Member Evaluation	5%	Due April 23 at 10pm PST
Final Exam	25%	Due by May 7 at 2:30pm

GRADING AND CLASS POLICIES

Your grade will be based upon the following criteria:

The grading itself is done by the Reader and myself using detailed criteria. If, despite our best efforts, you believe you did not receive the grade you deserved on an exam or assignment, you should send me an email describing the perceived error *within 14 days of receiving the grade*. Then hand back the original assignment to me (if I do not already have it), and I will review the entire exam/assignment and return it to you within 7 days. *Your grade may increase, decrease, or stay the same. I do not offer extra credit.*

A	93% and above
A-	90-92.99%
B+	87-89.99%
B	83-86.99%
B-	80-82.99%
C+	77-79.99%
C	73-76.99%
C-	70-72.99%
D	60-69.99%
F	59.99% and below

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS

- **Creating an inclusive classroom climate:**
 - We are all responsible for creating a learning environment that is welcoming, inclusive, equitable, and respectful. If you feel that these expectations are not being met, you can consult your instructor(s) or seek assistance from campus resources (see the [Academic Accommodations website](#)).
 - It is also important to understand that we are bound to make mistakes in this space, as anyone does when approaching complex tasks or learning new skills. I ask that you all strive to see your mistakes and others' as valuable elements of the learning process.
 - Recognize the impact of your words on others and speak with care. If informed that your words were hurtful or dismissive, listen to understand and commit to improvement.
- **Attendance**
 - Class sessions will be held in person, and it is important for you to attend class, so that you can participate in in-class discussions and group activities. Students are responsible for informing me before class if they will not be able to attend.
- **Academic Integrity**
 - Unless otherwise specified, any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor. In all of your assignments, including your paper and in-class exercises, you may use words or ideas written by other individuals in publications, web sites, or other sources, but only with proper attribution. If you are not clear about the expectations for completing an assignment or taking a test or

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examination, be sure to seek clarification from me beforehand. The consequences of cheating and academic dishonesty—including a formal discipline file, possible loss of future internship, scholarship, or employment opportunities, and denial of admission to graduate school—are best avoided.

ACCOMODATIONS AND SUPPORTIVE MEASURES

The purpose of academic accommodations is to ensure that all students have a fair chance at academic success. Disability, or hardships such as basic needs insecurity, uncertain documentation and immigration status, medical and mental health concerns, pregnancy and parenting, significant familial distress, and experiencing sexual violence or harassment, can affect a student's ability to satisfy course requirements. Students have the right to reasonable academic accommodations, without having to disclose personal information to instructors. For more information about accommodations, scheduling conflicts related to religious creed or extracurricular activities, please see the Academic Accommodations hub website: <https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub#accommodations>. This website also provides a range of helpful campus resources.

Note: This syllabus is subject to further changes or revisions.