

**Business M732
Consumer Behavior
Winter 2026 Course Outline**

**Marketing Area
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University**

COURSE OBJECTIVE

This course is designed to introduce you to key theoretical concepts in consumer behavior and build your ability to apply these concepts to real-world marketing problems.

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Monday 11:30-2:20

Instructor: Dr. Maureen Hupfer

Contact Information: hupferm@mcmaster.ca

Office Hours: Before or after class in-person (please let me know the day before class so that I can adjust my travelling time), and by appointment for a Zoom meeting.

This course has an Avenue learning website at <http://avenue.mcmaster.ca>

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value:	3	Leadership:	Yes	IT skills:	No	Global view:	Yes
Avenue to Learn:	Yes	Ethics:	Yes	Numeracy:	Yes	Written skills:	Yes
Participation:	Yes	Innovation:	Yes	Group work:	Yes	Oral skills:	Yes
Evidence-based:	Yes	Experiential:	Yes	Final Exam:	No		

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Theory, Business Application and Perspectives

How does who do what and why? The field of consumer behavior attempts to explain and predict the ways in which consumers think and behave in given situations. How do consumers interpret advertising information? Why do people buy? Why not? Who and what are consumers relying upon for information? How can marketers predict behaviors from attitudes? How do consumers

make decisions? How do we consume and dispose of products? To answer these questions, consumer behavior draws heavily on the disciplines of psychology, economics, sociology and anthropology. In this course, you will survey the relevant theory and learn how to apply these concepts to real world marketing situations. Class-time discussion of theory always will be supported with examples drawn from past and current business practices as well as consumers' everyday lives; we will be considering the social, ethical, regulatory, environmental and technological contexts in which consumers think and act. This course has a North American emphasis but we also will be comparing and contrasting international examples with consumer behavior in Canada and the United States.

This course stresses understanding, application, and generalization rather than memorization. In every field that you are studying, the body of accepted knowledge is growing and changing at an increasingly rapid rate. Because your success as a marketer will depend in part on your ability to find out about new knowledge and apply it to your own marketing problems, your performance in this course will be evaluated in terms of how well you are able to integrate textbook theory with business facts to arrive at explanations and recommendations.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Skills-related Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will have acquired experience in:

- preparation for and participation in classroom discussion;
- preparation of written assignments that demonstrate concept understanding and appropriate use of AI with fact-checking.

Course Content Mastery Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, students will:

- understand current psychological, sociological and anthropological theories that provide insight into consumer behavior;
- recognize which theoretical concepts are relevant to a particular decision-making context (such as an assignment or discussion question), demonstrate clearly how these principles apply, and provide responses that are supported with evidence;
- be able to apply theory to address real world marketing problems.

COURSE MATERIALS

There are no required course materials. The no-cost PPT material that will be posted on Avenue and covered in class provides comprehensive coverage of the theory and is supported with numerous examples to assist your learning in this course. All written evaluative components are based ONLY on the material in the PPT slides and the *Globe and Mail* articles that you will be able to access through the McMaster library.

Avenue Website

On this site you will find:

- PowerPoint lecture notes. Note that when I am including a YouTube clip in class, there will be a link in the material that I post on Avenue. I do this to avoid long download times;
- In-class exercises;
- Course documents such as this outline, the course schedule and any amendments to the course schedule;
- Your three assignments;
- Your marks.

EVALUATION

Learning in this course results from in-class discussion as well as out-of-class reading, analysis, and assignment preparation. Your performance will be evaluated on an **individual** basis throughout the term. There are no group components. Late assignments will be penalized 20% per day unless appropriate documentation is provided.

Components and Weights

Assignment 1 25%

Assignment 2 30%

Assignment 3 30%

Participation 15%.

Grade Conversion

At the end of the course your overall percentage grade will be converted to your letter grade in accordance with the following conversion scheme:

LETTER GRADE	PERCENT	POINTS
A+	90-100	12
A	85-89	11
A-	80-84	10
B+	75-79	9
B	70-74	8
B-	60-69	7
F	00-59	0

Course Component Descriptions

Individual Written Assignments

There are three individual assignments that will require you to apply theory to answer questions related to recent Globe and Mail articles that concentrate on Canadian themes and how Canada has been affected by international developments. Your assignments will be returned to you with very detailed marking schemes that include clear allocations of marks for correct points. You are free to use AI in any way that you choose. However, if you provide a response that is NOT included in the article facts, marks will be deducted. This is to ensure you understand that there can be negative consequences associated with relying entirely on AI-generated responses without face-checking. In the real world, these negative consequences can result in substantial harm to corporate reputation. For example, in May 2025, the *Chicago Sun-Times* included a summer reading list developed by a freelancer that included numerous hallucinations. See (<https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/2025/05/20/syndicated-content-sunday-print-sun-times-ai-misinformation>). The paper apologized for not vetting the article but the reputational damage persists.

Participation (15%)

Name cards and class pictures are used to help give credit for your participation. You must have a name card with your full first and last name clearly written and displayed in front of you for every class. Participation will be assessed throughout the term using a four-level grading scheme, where 0 = not present, 1 = present but very little involvement, 2 = moderate involvement, 3 = active, thoughtful commentary. Your participation marks will be recorded on Avenue after each class; you should be checking these postings regularly to ensure that they are consistent with your record of attendance and degree of contribution. If you do not have a picture on Mosaic, I will be asking you to send me one. Requests for review or changes to these grades must be made within a week of their posting. I will give you one “free” absence with no questions asked. After that, students without some form of documentation for their absence will receive a “0” for the week.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students that are uncomfortable in directly approaching an instructor regarding a course concern may send a confidential and anonymous email to the respective Area Chair or Associate Dean:

<http://mbastudent.degrote.mcmaster.ca/contact-anonymous/>

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student. Emails regarding course issues should NOT be sent to the Administrative Assistant.

Instructors are encouraged to conduct an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery. Instructors should provide evaluation feedback for at least 10% of the final grade to students prior to Week #8 in the term.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at:

www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity

Students are responsible for being aware of and demonstrating behaviour that is honest and ethical in their academic work. Such behaviour includes:

- following the expectations articulated by instructors for referencing sources of information and for group work;
- asking for clarification of expectations as necessary;
- identifying testing situations that may allow copying;
- preventing their work from being used by others (e.g., protecting access to computer files); and adhering to the principles of academic integrity when conducting and reporting research.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software.

All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ONLINE ELEMENT

All courses use some online elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course.

Students may be required to use the Respondus LockDown Browser and Respondus Monitor. The Respondus LockDown Browser is a downloadable program that allows a student to take an Avenue to Learn quiz in a secure environment.

For more details about McMaster's use of Respondus Lockdown Browser please go to <https://avenuehelp.mcmaster.ca/exec/respondus-lockdown-browser-and-respondus-monitor/>

The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses online elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure, please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx, Teams, or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ATTENDANCE

Arriving late or missing class disrupts the learning experience for both you and your peers. Punctuality and attendance are crucial to maintaining a respectful, professional, and productive environment for everyone, including our faculty.

MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

Missed Mid-Term Examinations / Tests / Class Participation

Please do not use the online [McMaster Student Absence Form \(MSAF\)](#) as this is for Undergraduate students only. The MBA program will not accept an MSAF.

When students miss regularly scheduled term work which contributes 10% or more to the final grade, for legitimate reasons as determined by the Student Experience – Academic Office (SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office)), the activity necessary to compensate for the missed work will be determined by the course instructor. The compensatory activities assigned will vary with the nature of the course and the missed requirement. They include, but are not restricted to, an alternative assignment, a rescheduled midterm exam, or re-weighting the marks for the missed component to other mark components. Documentation explaining such missed

work must be provided to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) within five (5) working days of the scheduled date for completion of the work.

Acceptable reasons for missed work, along with the [Petition for Missed Term Work](#) and the [MBA Student McMaster University Student Health Certificate](#), can be found on the DeGroote MBA Student website (mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca). Please direct any questions about acceptable documentation to the MBA Academic Advisors (askmba@mcmaster.ca). University policy states that a student may submit a maximum of three (3) [Petition for Missed Term Work](#) per academic year, after which the student must meet with the Director of the program. If term work is missed without an approved reason, students will receive a grade of zero (0) for that component.

Missed Final Examinations

Students must be available for the duration of the posted exam period regardless of their personal exam schedule. This is to ensure student availability throughout the entire exam period in the event that an exam must be rescheduled due to unforeseen circumstances (university closure, power outage, storm policy, etc.). A student who misses a final examination without valid reason will receive a mark of 0 on the examination.

Students who have missed a final exam for a valid reason can apply to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) to write a deferred examination by submitting an [Application for Deferring a Final Exam](#) with supporting documentation. The application must be made within five days of the scheduled exam.

The [Application for Deferring a Final Exam](#) and the [MBA Student McMaster University Student Health Certificate](#) can be found on the DeGroote MBA Current Student website (mbastudent.degroote.mcmaster.ca)

Deferred examination privileges, if granted, are normally satisfied during the examination period at the end of the following semester. In select cases, the deferred examination may be written at a time facilitated by the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) (Student Experience Academic Office) and agreed to by the course instructor. Requests for a second deferral or rescheduling of a deferred examination will not be considered.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Student Accessibility Services (SAS) offers various support services for students with disabilities. Students are required to inform SAS of accommodation needs for course work at the outset of term. Students must forward a copy of such SAS accommodation to the instructor normally, within the first three (3) weeks of classes by setting up an appointment with the instructor. If a student with a disability chooses NOT to take advantage of an SAS

accommodation and chooses to sit for a regular exam, a petition for relief may not be filed after the examination is complete. The SAS website is:

<http://sas.mcmaster.ca>

Use of Test Accommodations at McMaster University Burlington Campus Ron Joyce Centre

Whereas Student Accessibility Services (SAS), on Main Campus, determines all MBA student accommodations, the MBA Faculty Office manages the coordination of accommodations for tests, midterms, and exams at the Ron Joyce Centre in Burlington.

Process for Students

- Students must activate their accommodation(s) (e.g., extra-time, memory aid, etc.) for each upcoming test, midterm, or exam, at least two weeks in advance. Students can do this by emailing their Instructor and the DeGroote MBA SAS scheduling office at DSBSAS@mcmaster.ca. If a student cannot meet this deadline, they should contact DSBSAS@mcmaster.ca to discuss alternative arrangements. The program is committed to exploring flexibility where possible to support students.
- All tests, midterms, and exams are booked synchronously with the class's start time. Any deviations from the start time (e.g. start earlier than the class to enable completion at the same end time) requires a discussion with their instructor on protocol at the time of accommodation activation.
- Students will leverage the accommodation (e.g., extra-time, memory aid, etc.), in a designated testing room. Rooms will be booked according to the student's SAS accommodation. Unless the accommodation states otherwise, students should expect that they will be writing in a room with other students. One or more invigilators will always be in the room.
- Following the request to activate the accommodation(s), dsbsas@mcmaster.ca will reach out to the student with their test, midterm, or exam details, including the date, time, and room number. As there may be other students writing tests in the room, we ask that students enter the room quietly and leave all personal items at the front of the room.

All policies and procedures, including restroom access, how extra-time is allocated for assessments under Universal Design, and the submission of memory aids in advance, are consistent with those of SAS on Main Campus. The only variance in procedure is communication around, and physical location of, assessment. There is not a dedicated testing space at RJC. Existing classrooms and lecture halls will be used for most testing. All SAS-approved accommodations will be honoured by our staff; however, core testing elements are not eliminated in alternative testing formats. Students should expect and plan for invigilation, incidental noise, and other potential distractions.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to the SEAO (Student Experience Academic Office) ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures by University instructors.**

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

POTENTIAL MODIFICATION TO THE COURSE

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your registration and continuous participation (e.g. on A2L, in the classroom, etc.) to the various learning activities of M732 will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

You may use the AI program of your choice to assist in your three written assignments.

Business M732
Consumer Behavior
Winter 2026 Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to change if necessary. You should make a habit of checking Avenue News and your McMaster email every day for course-relevant communication.

Week	Dates (M)	Content
1	Jan 5	<p>Course Outline and Overview</p> <p>Cultural Influences on Consumer Behavior Part 1 Activity: Cultural Differences in Dining Preferences</p> <p>Note that some material here related to current political situations and natural disasters may act as a personal trigger feature; you may want to consider where you are as well as your social circumstances when you are reviewing this material.</p>
2	Jan 12	<p>Cultural Influences on Consumer Behavior Part 2</p> <p>The Creation and Diffusion of Culture Activity: Evaluating Generative AI as an Innovation</p> <p>Jan 16 is add/drop day</p>
3	Jan 19	<p>Canadian Identity, Racial and Ethnic Subcultures</p> <p>Income and Social Class</p> <p>Jan 23 is last day for withdrawal without academic penalty</p>
4	Jan 26	<p>Age Activity: Is Age Segmentation a Good Approach?</p> <p>Group Influence and Social Media Part 1 Activity: Reference Group Influence</p>



5	Feb 2	<p>Group Influence and Social Media Part 2 Activity: No One Buys No Name Trainers</p> <p>Family Structure/Household Decision Making</p>
6	Feb 9	<p>Perception Activity: Tropicana Packaging</p> <p>Assignment 1 due Feb 13</p>
Feb 16-22 Midterm Recess – Enjoy!		
7	Feb 23	<p>Learning and Memory Part 1 Activity: The Pitfalls of Reinforcement</p> <p>Learning and Memory Part 2 Activity: Developing a Schema for McDonalds</p>
8	Mar 2	<p>Motivation and Affect Activity: McGuire's Motivations</p> <p>The Self Part 1</p> <p>Note that some material here related to body image and self-concept may act as a personal trigger feature; you may want to consider where you are as well as your social circumstances when you are reviewing this material.</p>
9	Mar 9	<p>The Self Part 2 Activity: Is There Such a Thing as Women's Toothpaste?</p> <p>Note that some material here related to body image and self-concept may act as a personal trigger feature; you may want to consider where you are as well as your social circumstances when you are reviewing this material.</p> <p>Personality, Lifestyle and Values Activity: Prizm Lifestyles</p> <p>Assignment 2 due March 13</p>

10	Mar 16	<p>Attitudes</p> <p>Activity: Attitude Toward the Object</p> <p>Attitude Change and Interactive Communication Part 1</p> <p>Note that some material related to fear appeals and/or substance use may act as a personal trigger feature; you may want to consider where you are as well as your social circumstances when you are reviewing this material.</p>
11	Mar 23	<p>Attitude Change and Interactive Communication Part 2</p> <p>Individual Decision Making Part 1</p>
12	Mar 30	<p>Individual Decision Making Part 2</p> <p>Activity: Non-compensatory Decision-making</p> <p>Buying and Disposing</p> <p>.</p>
13	Apr 6	<p>Class time for working on third assignment – if necessary, will be a make-up class for a potential snow day</p> <p>Assignment 3 due April 13</p>

Last day of classes Apr 10.