


International Summer University^{WU} 2025

WU (Vienna University of Economics and Business)

Course Outline

Course Title	The Dark Side of Marketing
Instructor	<p>Dr. Riina Koris riina.koris@ebs.ee</p> <p>EBS – Estonian Business School Department of Marketing and Communication</p> 
Language of instruction	English
Course level	Graduate
Contact hours	35 teaching hours (45 min. each)

Aim of the Course

This is a course which has been inspired by current dynamic societal changes, which call for a new, time-sensitive mindset. The aim of this course is to draw on the influence of marketing activities on consumer behavior by placing marketing ideas in a broader societal context, thus challenging today's *status quo*. Therefore, **this course requires and open mind and a fair amount of critical thinking.**

During this course, participants will gain insights into existing and potential inherent conflicts which arise within the interplay of contemporary marketing practices and the society. By viewing marketing activities through different stakeholder lenses (e.g. the company lens, the consumer lens, the wider societal lens, the „planet“ lens, among others), course participants will acquire a balanced view of the effect of marketing and inherent consumer culture on different stakeholder groups in the society.

This is not a course which enables its participants to immediately utilize the obtained knowledge and “turn it into dollars” the moment they emerge from the classroom. Instead, this course aims at a future long-term benefit where managers with newly obtained knowledge will be able to recognize the antecedents of (the somewhat dubious) modern marketing and managerial practices, thus paving the way for making a difference which benefits the society at large.

Learning Objectives

In this course the participant

- will be aware of the ontological realm of modern marketing and its „forerunners“ (e.g. T. Veblen, The Frankfurt School, M. Foucault, among others);
- will recognize how the serving consumer „needs“ impacts various stakeholder groups, including the society in general;
- is able to evaluate the impact of modern marketing activities on the immediate and less immediate stakeholder groups;

- can identify the frequently “hidden agendas” of marketing techniques and campaigns used to create a reaction which often benefits the “company view” only;
- is able to critically evaluate various instances of misconduct („the tricks of the trade”) within established marketing frameworks (e.g. the marketing mix, the segmentations variables, etc);
- will be aware of the impact of modern marketing on vulnerable groups and its effect on society at large;
- will recognize the much promoted, but frequently negative effects of globalization and international marketing on non-Western cultures and consumers.

Application Requirements and / or Prerequisites

Application requirements for the International Summer University WU can be found [on the ISU WU website](#).

Applicants interested in participating in the International Summer University^{WU} need an excellent command of the English language. The English language requirements can be found at [ISU^{WU} Language Requirements](#).

Teaching Methods

1. Within this course, a variety of didactic elements are utilized to facilitate the successful completion of the learning outcomes outlined above. The course is delivered as a mix of highly interactive lectures covering theoretical concepts and their application, during which participants will also learn from each other.
2. The pre-course assignment aims to prepare participants and “set the mood” for the course, thus enabling a seamless start.
3. A key element in the course delivery is the final assignment, which allows for an immediate transfer of knowledge to the immediate environment that surrounds the various stakeholder groups.

Pre-Course Assignment

The assignment (1000-1500 words in total)

1. **Scan** the 4 (four) articles selected for the pre-course assignment (see section “course literature” below). **Choose 1 as per your liking** that you will write a reflection on. **Tip:** as you will see while scanning the articles, some of them are longer and others shorter. I urge you not to choose the shortest, but the one that you find the most engaging. Additionally, longer ones frequently offer more content for reflection.

2. **Read** the selected article carefully, applying to it a pencil or highlights to mark what seems to be more relevant and what you believe you will need for writing the reflection.

3. **Start writing** the reflection. A recommended, rough structure:

a) Introduce the article. Focus on the important points, claims, and information. This should be about **20-25%** of the reflection;

b) Write your critique. This is the core of your reflection. Remember that a critique doesn't necessarily mean that you only criticize it. Instead, **evaluate** the main points and arguments in the article. Identify possible **biases** in the article. Point out where you (dis)agree with the author(s), then provide support as to why (not). While writing the critique, support it with evidence from your personal observations/experiences, other texts/classes and/or everyday life. **Your article review must be relatable, “human” and personalized.** It is very important that **you** as the author of the review **are present in this review**. To achieve this, you could use sentence-starters, such as “The article I read was about...”; “It showcased how...”; “I found the article...”; „What struck me most, was...”; „Even though well-argued, I think...”, and the like. Additionally, enriching your critique with personal experience and/or observations will also add to relatability and

personalization. End by suggesting **which audiences would benefit** from reading the article. This should be about **60-65%** of the reflection;

c) Write the conclusion of your article review. Briefly summarize the main points of the article, AND your opinions about its significance/relevance. This should be about **20-25%** of the reflection.

d) Submit this assignment as a **WORD document via **Canvas**; **Deadline July 2nd, 2025****

NB! This article review does not need to follow any established formatting styles.

NB! The use of AI tools for this assignment is only allowed for improving the language of the text (choice of vocabulary, grammar, and the like). Under no circumstances is it allowed to "outsource" the writing of the review (critiquing, collecting ideas, etc) to an AI tool.

Course Contents	
Day 1	Ontological premise and sources of inspiration for Dark Side of Marketing; on (dis)advantages of choice; consumer sovereignty.
Day 2	Advertising as the "magic" system; groupwork on a visual advertisement analysis in terms of various stakeholders in the society.
Day 3	An overview of potential malpractice with the marketing mix; critical perspectives on ethical consumption.
Day 4	Make sure to read by 14.7 Pollay, R.W. 1986. The distorted mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising. Journal of Marketing, 50(2), pp. 18-36. Groupwork on Pollay's article "The Distorted Mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising"; The vulnerable groups and sources of vulnerability; critical perspectives on international marketing within Bourdieu's types of capital;
Day 5	groupwork on marketing to the vulnerable populations. Possessions and the extended self; reifications of brands
Day 6	groupwork on consumerism and identity mapping; Corporate and customer efforts to act back – action, not just words;
Day 7	Final assignment – group presentations
Day 8	Final assignment – group presentations

Comments

This is a highly interactive course where learning, in addition to the pre-course assignment and the end-of-course presentation, will occur via thinking along and **participating actively**.

Criteria for successful completion of the course

Pre-course assignment (25% of the total grade for the course). Grading components:

Introductory summary of the article	5%
Your critique	15%
Conclusion of the 1) article; AND 2) your critique	5%
Total of course grade	25%

Active participation (25% of the total grade for the course).

Each student must participate actively during the class. The evaluation of this criterion will be rather subjective, so try to do your best.

End-of-course presentation (50% of the total grade for the course). Grading components:

Analysis of the cases in terms of course material	25%
Presentation quality (enthusiasm, competence);	15%
Response to questions / comments	10%
Total of course grade	50%

Assessment

Pre-course assignment	25%
Participation (not just attendance)	25%
Group work presentation	50%
TOTAL	100%

Course Literature

Read by 14.7 Pollay, R.W. 1986. The distorted mirror: Reflections on the Unintended Consequences of Advertising. *Journal of Marketing*, 50(2), pp. 18-36.

Pre-course: Üstüner, T. and Holt, D.B. 2007. Dominated consumer acculturation: The social construction of poor migrant women's consumer identity projects in a Turkish Squatter. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(1), pp. 41-56.

Pre-course: Belk, W.R. 1998. In the arms of the overcoat: On luxury, romanticism and consumer desire. In: S. Brown, B. Clarke and A.M. Doherty, eds. *Romancing the Market*. London: Routledge, pp. 41-55.

Pre-course: Iivonen, K. and Moisander, J. 2015. Rhetorical Construction of Narcissistic CSR Orientation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 131(3), pp. 649- 664.

Pre-course: Moisander, J. and Pesonen, S., 2002. Narratives of sustainable ways of living: constructing the self and the other as a green consumer. *Management decision*, 40(4), pp.329-342.

Further Readings suggested by the Lecturer(s)

Tadajewski, M., Higgins, M., Denegri-Knott, J., & Varman, R. (Eds.). (2019). *The Routledge companion to critical marketing*. New York: Routledge.

Information on the Use of Artificial Intelligence Tools

The use of AI tools for pre-course assignment and end-of-course presentation is only allowed for improving the language of the text (choice of vocabulary, grammar, and the like). **Under no circumstances is it allowed to "outsource" the writing of the pre-course assignment or creating the end-of-course presentation to an AI tool.**

Please note the following information on the total workload of the respective course:

Course level	ECTS credits	Pre-course workload	In-class activity	Outside of class workload during the program
Graduate	4	approx. 20 hours	27 hours (= 35 teaching hours), plus wrap-up session on day 8	approx. 33 hours