Course Outline (Template for 2025/2026)

Course Code	RSM 353 H1S
Course Name	Consumer Behavior
Term, Year	Winter 2026
Course Meets	Monday 3-5 PM
Web page URL	

Instructor Details

Name	Email	Office Hours
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Course Scope, Mission and Learning Outcomes

Course Description (Integrated with AI & Consumer Behaviour)

This course explores the **neurological, psychological, social, and cultural forces** that shape how consumers think, feel, decide, and behave in the marketplace. Grounded in consumer behaviour theory and enriched by insights from **neuroscience, cognitive psychology, sociology, economics, and data science**, the course equips students with a deep understanding of *why* consumers behave as they do—and how marketers can ethically and strategically respond in an increasingly AI-enabled world.

Delivered in a **seminar-style format**, the course emphasizes critical discussion, applied analysis, and debate. **Industry guest speakers** are integrated throughout the term to provide **current, real-world perspectives** on consumer insights, shopper behaviour, and consumer-driven marketing strategy across industries and channels. The course highlights how organizations are using **artificial intelligence, machine learning, and advanced analytics** to identify patterns in consumer behaviour, predict preferences, personalize experiences, and optimize customer journeys.

A core feature of the course is **personal reflection**. Students are encouraged to examine how course concepts relate to their own **values, identities, social influences, and consumption choices**, fostering a richer understanding of consumer behaviour at both the personal and professional levels. This reflective lens is especially important as AI increasingly mediates consumer experiences, raising critical questions around trust, privacy, transparency, and ethical influence.

The course emphasizes that **effective marketing strategy requires more than data or algorithms alone**. Successful managers must synthesize **consumer needs, motivations, and emotions** with **organizational capabilities, competitive dynamics, and technological tools**. While AI can scale

insight and efficiency, this course reinforces that **consumer behaviour theory provides the essential framework** for interpreting, guiding, and applying AI-driven insights responsibly.

Students will analyze consumer thoughts, feelings, and behaviours across **individual and group contexts**, with particular attention to how consumers **process information, form attitudes, make decisions, and evaluate experiences** in both digital and physical environments. The conceptual material draws on **information-processing models of behaviour**, supplemented with research from marketing, social and cognitive psychology, sociology, and economics, as well as applied examples of AI-enabled marketing practice.

A balanced mix of **lectures, discussions, readings, and applied examples** supports the development of both **analytical rigor and managerial insight**. Lectures highlight, clarify, and extend key theories of consumer behaviour and demonstrate their relevance to contemporary marketing challenges, including AI-driven personalization, automation, and decision support. Assigned readings connect academic research to **current business practice**, enabling students to translate theory into actionable, consumer-centric marketing strategies.

Course Learning Outcomes
By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Understand contemporary conceptual, empirical, and methodological developments in consumer behaviour research, including the growing role of AI and advanced analytics.
- Analyze how cultural, social, technological, and environmental forces—including digital platforms and algorithms—shape consumer behaviour across contexts.
- Evaluate individual differences among consumers and assess how these differences influence preferences, decision-making, and responsiveness to AI-enabled marketing.
- Explain the role of motivation, involvement, emotion, and affect in consumer decision-making and how these constructs are operationalized within AI-driven systems.
- Assess how consumers perceive, process, learn, and remember marketing information, and how AI tools leverage attention, memory, and habit formation.
- Apply theories of attitudes, persuasion, and influence to both traditional and AI-enabled marketing communications.
- Analyze consumer decision-making processes and evaluate how AI-driven personalization and recommendation systems influence satisfaction, loyalty, and trust.
- Integrate consumer behaviour theory with AI-generated insights to interpret consumer responses across digital and physical touchpoints.
- Critically evaluate the strengths, limitations, and ethical implications of AI in understanding and influencing consumer behaviour.
- Apply behavioural principles, research findings, and AI-informed insights to diagnose marketing problems and design consumer-centric strategies.
- Demonstrate strong analytical, critical thinking, and decision-making skills, and communicate insights clearly and persuasively in both written and oral formats.

Course Prerequisites
RSM250H1 and completion of Guaranteed Admission Requirements

Course Materials

Additional materials may be posted on Quercus.

Item	Title	Required or Recommended	Location
Textbook	*Consumer Behaviour: Buying, Having, and Being, Ninth Canadian Edition*, (2023/2024; Toronto, Ontario: Pearson) by Michael R. Solomon, Katherine White, Darren W. Dahl, & Kelley J. Main	Required	eTextbook available on the Pearson Canada Website
Casepack	ISBN: 9780137652167 https://hbsp.harvard.edu/import/1366491	Required	$35.75

Please note that ***it is essential for you to obtain and read the Required Readings*** because they will be essential resources for learning the course material, contributing to the weekly discussions, and completing the **Analysis and Application Papers**. Daily reading assignments are listed in the **Class Schedule**.

The required e-text for the course is *Consumer Behaviour: Buying, Having, and Being, Ninth Canadian Edition*, (2024; Toronto, Ontario: Pearson) by Michael R. Solomon, Kelly J. Main, Katherine White, Darren W. Dahl, & Bonnie Simpson. This e-text may be rented from *Pearson Canada*.

Additional required readings are available at the Harvard Business School Publishing website (see **Electronic Course Materials** below), which will allow you to purchase and access the files electronically. The readings that you will need to purchase from the HBS website are marked in the **Class Schedule** with an ***HBS*** superscript (article citation^{HBS}).

All other required readings are available electronically through the *University of Toronto Libraries*. You can view and/or print these articles online by clicking on the article titles, which are provided in the folders for the specific class sessions on the portal (see **Electronic Course Materials** below).

Evaluation and Grades

Grades are a measure of the knowledge and skills developed by a student within individual courses. Each student will receive a grade on the basis of how well they have command of the course materials, skills and learning objectives of the course.

Additional course resources, including announcements, required readings, handouts, and links to relevant websites and videos, are available on the *Quercus Portal*. You must log in to this website using your UTORid and password before the first class and regularly during the course to access the required reading material. Once you have logged in, you will see the Dashboard, which shows all courses in which you are presently enrolled. If you don't see this course listed but are correctly registered for the course in *ACORN*, wait 48 hours. If the course still does not appear, please notify the instructor. You may also explore the *Student Quercus Guide*.

It is expected that students in the classroom will use technology responsibly, with consideration for their fellow students and other members of the University community. Students are encouraged to use laptops for note-taking, in-class activities, course-related portal and web access. Laptops are not to be used for email,

instant messaging, web browsing, or any other disruptive activity to other students, the instructor, or the classroom environment.

Grading

Grades are a measure of the performance of a student in individual courses. Students will be judged based on their demonstrated understanding of the course material. All assignments in this course must be completed individually. Each assignment for this course will be given a numerical score based on the University of Toronto's *University Assessment and Grading Practices Policy*. The final grade for the course will be computed by multiplying the numeric mark on each assignment by the corresponding weight for that assignment.

Course Component	**Due Date**	**Weight**
Class Participation	Ongoing	17%
Assignment 1 AI & Consumer Behaviour	Feb 23 11:59	20%
Group Consumer Behaviour Research - Circle K Category Management	April 6	40%
Consumer Diary & Assignment Personal experience	April 6	20%
Research Requirement	April 5	3%
Total		100%

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Course Format and Expectations

1. Class Participation/Attendance

Class Participation

Thoughtful questions, rigorous analysis, strong oral presentation skills, and the ability to critically evaluate alternative perspectives are important skills for any successful manager. This course will focus on developing a coherent, rigorous, and practical understanding of the behaviour of consumers in a range of marketing contexts by encouraging active participation in the weekly class discussions.

Participation grades will be assigned based on each student's comments during each session. *To benefit from the course material, you must read and analyze the assigned readings before each class session.* Topics from the assigned textbook chapters and articles will be the focus of discussion each week. Thorough preparation before each session will help you to consistently offer higher-quality comments during the class discussions. It is important to understand that the class participation grade is intended not just to provide me with information about your preparation and understanding of the assigned material and your persuasive abilities, but to provide you with an incentive to get involved in discussions and share your unique perspective.

You are encouraged to regularly contribute relevant facts, questions, interpretations, examples, terminology, frameworks, professional experiences, and alternative points of view during the class discussions. You are strongly encouraged to draw on relevant concepts, theories, and analytic methods from your assigned readings and other marketing courses when participating.

Your participation will be assessed on a scale from 0 to 4 following each class session based on the following considerations:

- *Does the student arrive promptly for class and participate in discussions?*
- *Is the student prepared to discuss and demonstrate a mastery of consumer concepts, theories, and analytical tools covered in the assigned reading material?*
- *Does the student contribute relevant and recognized consumer behaviour examples based on professional and personal experiences? Is the student able to creatively apply consumer concepts, theories, and analytical tools to offer insights into real marketing problems?*
- *Does the student listen to other comments and avoid repetition of previous contributions? Is the student able to understand, elaborate, and evaluate comments from other participants?*
- *Do the questions and comments move the discussion forward and contribute to a productive learning environment? Do they promote further useful discussions?*
- *Is the student able to communicate effectively? Are comments presented in a clear, concise, and compelling manner?*
- *Does the student show respect for other speakers and their points of view?*

Keep in mind that the participation grade is not simply a function of the quantity of participation, but also of the quality of participation.

You are required to place a visible name card on your desk during each class session. You must notify me by email if you plan to use a name in class (e.g., on your name card) that is different from the name you have on file with the registrar (see *ACORN*). Failure to comply with these requirements will adversely affect your participation grade.

Frequent absences or a consistent failure to participate in discussions could result in an FZ (failing grade) for class participation. While attendance is necessary to participate in class discussions, attendance on its own will not contribute to the participation grade. Students must make meaningful contributions to discussions to earn participation credit.

You should use these classroom discussions as an opportunity to develop the oral communication and persuasion skills that are essential in most management careers. It is my responsibility to encourage and enforce a respectful environment in the classroom, and you should feel at ease when asking questions or contributing ideas during discussions. Likewise, you should respect the views expressed by your colleagues by offering your complete attention and constructive contributions. Please contact me if you have any concerns about the classroom learning environment.

Using Sona: Pre-registered Account and Course Registration

To participate in a research study, you will need to sign into our Rotman Behavioural Research Lab (BRL) research participation website (Sona): https://rotman.sona-systems.com/. Please add both the Sona Admin, rotman-admin@sona-systems.net, and Behavioural Research Lab, Behavioural.Lab@rotman.utoronto.ca, email addresses to your email contact list. This will ensure that registration and password reset links, as well as important updates regarding your account and the study participation assignments are not mistakenly marked as spam.

New Users: If you're new to the credit pool, you will need to request an account
Former Participants: Those with existing BRL credit-pool accounts on Sona can use their previous credentials to log into Sona.

Trouble Logging In: If the website says you already have an account, but you do not have the log-in information, please use the "Forgot Password" feature on the Sona log-in page to have these credentials sent to your email. Your log-in email will be "[Username]@mail.utoronto.ca"

Please familiarize yourself with the "Student Research-Participation Guide," made available to you by your professor: this guide, as well as the FAQ on Sona, cover all the pertinent steps and criteria for registering for studies and completing your participation requirement through either study participation or article analyses. Feel free to email Behavioural.Lab@rotman.utoronto.ca if you have any questions.

Research opportunities for the Winter session are anticipated to begin by week 3 of the term, and end around week 11. Do not wait until the last minute to complete the research requirement – there are not always many studies at the end of the semester.

Team or Group Assignments
Group case presentation requires students to work in teams of 7 to 8. Learning to work together in teams is a crucial transferrable skill you will use not only in your coursework, but also in your future careers. Support is available if you encounter common teamwork challenges such as:

- Team members feeling left out of the team.
- Team members not responding in a timely manner to communication.
- Division or quality of work among team members being unequal or unfair.

Consult the Centre for Professional Skills Teamwork Resources page for tips, strategies, and best practices. You can also book an appointment with a teamwork mentor through the RC Centre for Professional Skills Writing Centre. Teamwork mentors can help you resolve or mitigate conflict, strategize on planning, or improve team communication.

If you are a student registered with Accessibility Services, and extensions are one of your academic accommodations, consult with your Accessibility Advisor about the teamwork in this course.

Missed Assignments (including the final-term assessment)
Students who miss a term test or assignment for reasons entirely beyond their control (e.g. illness) may request special consideration **within 2 business days** of the missed midterm/test/assignment due date.

In such cases, students must:

1. Complete the Request for Special Consideration form: https://uoft.me/RSMConsideration
2. Provide documentation to support the request, eg. Absence Declaration from ACORN, Verifcation of Illness Form etc.

Please note: Students may use the Absence Declaration on ACORN ***one time per term*** to report an absence and request consideration. **Any subsequent absence will require a Verification of Illness form or other similar relevant documentation.**

Students who do not submit their requests and documentation within 2 days may receive a grade of 0 (zero) on the missed course deliverable.

Students who do not provide this information will be given a grade of 0 (zero) for the missed course deliverable. If the documentation is accepted, students will submit answers to a make-up assessment. Email

Late Assignments
All assignments are due on the date and at the time specified in Quercus. Late submissions will normally be penalized by 20% if the assignment is not received on the specified date, at the specified time. Students who, for reasons beyond their control, are unable to submit an assignment by its deadline must obtain approval from the instructor for an extension. Supporting documentation will be required as per the policy on missed tests and assignments.

Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Toronto is committed to equity, human rights and respect for diversity. All members of the learning environment in this course should strive to create an atmosphere of mutual respect where all members of our community can express themselves, engage with each other, and respect one another's differences. U of T does not condone discrimination or harassment against any persons or communities.

Commitment to Accessibility

The University is committed to inclusivity and accessibility, and strives to provide support for, and facilitate the accommodation of, individuals with disabilities so that all may share the same level of access to opportunities and activities offered at the University.

If you require accommodations for a temporary or ongoing disability or health concern, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please email Accessibility Services or visit the Accessibility Services website for more information as soon as possible. Obtaining your accommodation letter may take up to several weeks, so get in touch with them as soon as possible. If you have general questions or concerns about the accessibility of this course, you are encouraged to reach out to your instructor, course coordinator, or Accessibility Services.

Turnitin

Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University's plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool's reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University's use of this tool are described on the University's Plagiarism Detection Tool FAQ page from Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation.

Generative AI / ChatGPT

Students may not use artificial intelligence tools for taking tests, writing research papers, creating computer code, or completing major course assignments. However, these tools may be useful when gathering information from across sources and assimilating it for understanding.

Academic Integrity

Academic Integrity is a fundamental value essential to the pursuit of learning and scholarship at the University of Toronto. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that the U of T degree that you earn will continue to be valued and respected as a true signifier of a student's individual work and academic achievement. As a result, the University treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously.

The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the process for addressing academic offences and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.

- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes collaborating with others on assignments that are supposed to be completed individually).

On test and exams

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation

- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.
- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) medical notes.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated by the procedures outlined in the *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. If you have any questions about what is or is not permitted in the course, please do not hesitate to contact the course instructor. If you have any questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from the instructor or other U of T or RC resources such as the RC Centre for Professional Skills, the College Writing Centres or the Academic Success Centre.

Email
At times, the course instructor may decide to communicate important course information by email. As such, all U of T students are required to have a valid UTmail+ email address. You are responsible for ensuring that your UTmail+ email address is set up and properly entered on ACORN. For more information visit the Information Commons Help Desk.

Forwarding your utoronto.ca email to a Gmail or other type of email account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from utoronto.ca addresses sent to Gmail accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that important messages from your course instructor may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

Recording Lectures
Lectures and course materials prepared by the instructor are considered by the University to be an instructor's intellectual property covered by the Canadian Copyright Act. Students wishing to record a lecture or other course material in any way are required to ask the instructor's explicit permission and may not do so unless permission is granted. Students who have been previously granted permission to record lectures as an accommodation for a disability are excepted. This includes tape recording, filming, photographing PowerPoint slides, Quercus materials, etc.

If permission for recording is granted by the instructor (or via Accessibility Services), it is intended for the individual student's own study purposes and does not include permission to

“publish” them in any way. It is forbidden for a student to publish an instructor’s notes to a website or sell them in any other form without formal permission.

Tentative Weekly Schedule (subject to change)

Class Schedule

You are expected to read the assigned material ***before*** each class session begins.

Session	*Date*	*Topic and Assignments*
Week 1	January 5	***Introduction to Consumer Behaviour*** *Chapters 1* • *VIDEO: Gladwell on Choice, Happiness and Spaghetti Sauce https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIiAAhUeR6Y* • *Simons, "The Monkey Business Illusion," online video (Youtube)*
2	January 12	***Consumer Perception & Group Assignment review*** ***Chapter 2*** *Video: Kahneman on Memory - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XgRlrBl-7Yg* *Brown, "Subliminal Advertising [?]," online video (YouTube)*
3	January 19	**Consumer Knowledge and Memory** ***Chapter 3*** *Case - Research: When Consumers Feel Less Powerful, They Seek More Variety* *Mindshift Digital Marketing, "How to Utilize Sensory Marketing," online video (Youtube)*
4	January 26	**Consumer Motivation, Involvement, and Emotions** ***Chapter 4*** ***Casepack - How GLP-1 Medications Are Changing Consumer Behavior***
5	February 2	**Consumer Attitudes** ***Chapter 7*** *Loyalty is Overrated (HBR)*

6	February 9	**Consumer Persuasion** **Chapter 8** ***Casepack - Marketing Reading: Consumer Behavior and the Buying Process***
7	February 16	***Reading Week***
8	February 23	**Consumer Decision Making** ***Chapter 9*** ***Casepack - Research: What Consumers Find Persuasive in Online Reviews*** *Video: Barrett on Emotions - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gks6ceq4eQ&t=721s*
9	March 2	**Group Influence and Social Media** ***Chapter 11*** ***Casepack - AI Beyond Transactions***
10	March 9	**Consumer Demographics and Psychographics** ***Chapter 6&13*** ***Casepack - What Should Retailers Do About AI Shoppers?***
11	March 16	**Cultural Influences on Consumer Behaviour** ***Chapter 14***
12	March 23	**The Self, Sustainability, and CSR** ***Chapter 5***
13	March 30	***Group Presentations***

Other Useful Links

- Become a volunteer note taker
- Accessibility Services Note Taking Support
- Credit / No-Credit in RSM courses
- Rotman Commerce Academic Support

URL links for print

- ACORN: http://www.acorn.utoronto.ca/
- Email Accessibility Services: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca
- Accessibility Services website: http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/as
- University's Plagiarism Detection Tool FAQ: https://uoft.me/pdt-faq
- The University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters: http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm
- Information Commons Help Desk: http://help.ic.utoronto.ca/category/3/utmail.html
- Become a volunteer note taker: https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/program/volunteer-note-taking/
- Accessibility Services Note Taking Support: https://studentlife.utoronto.ca/service/note-taking-support/
- Credit / No-Credit in RSM courses: https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/degree-requirements/credit-no-credit-option/
- Rotman Commerce Academic Support: https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-support/
- Book an appointment with a writing or presentation coach: http://uoft.me/writingcentres
- Writing and Presentation Coaching academic support page: https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/current-students/academic-support/writing-and-presentation-coaching/
- Centre for Professional Skills Teamwork Resources page: https://rotmancommerce.utoronto.ca/teamwork-resources
- Book an appointment with a Teamwork Mentor: http://uoft.me/writingcentres