

University of Chicago Booth School of Business

Current Topics in Behavioral Science 1: Consumer Behavior and Experience (38901)

**Spring 2020, Wednesdays 3:00pm – 6:00pm
Harper Center Seminar Room 3SW**

Instructors:

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Brief Course Description:

This is a graduate seminar for Ph.D. students interested in consumer behavior and experience, broadly defined. The course will be divided into two parts. The first half (led by Ann) will address four distinct topics in consumer research, an area of study to which many managerial and organizational behavior students ultimately contribute. These topics are anthropomorphism, decision making about food, numerosity, and social influence. The second half (led by Ed) will cover current topics related to the psychology of real-time experience, such as how beliefs shape hedonic reactions like enjoyment and how online consumption can diverge from memories and forecasts of those same experiences.

The purpose of this seminar is to stimulate future research, by you, on the course topics. In the first half of the quarter, we will review recent research on topics of importance in consumer research, which has been examined from different angles and, in some cases, different paradigms. We will examine this work critically to assess present contribution, open questions, and possible avenues of integration. In the second half of the quarter, we will continue pursuing these goals in the context of research conducted by Ed and related research by others.

Course Requirements:

Your grade for the course will be based on three factors:

30% on class participation. You are expected to read the assigned articles in advance, actively participate in class discussions, generate original research ideas, and, importantly, provide critical and constructive comments on your classmates' research ideas. Each week, a student, or team of students, from the class will be assigned as the *discussion leader(s)*. Prior to each class, students who are not leading the discussion should send questions and comments on the papers to the discussion leader(s). The discussion leader(s) is(are) then expected to provide a summary of the day's readings and facilitate and structure the discussion. In examining each reading, consider both its strengths and weaknesses. What was its intended advancement to the literature, how well did it achieve that goal, and how might it have been improved? Did other research ideas come to mind while reading the paper?

70% on presentation and paper. The main purpose of this course is to stimulate research, and as part of this class you will be asked to develop two mini research projects. One mini project should be related to the topics covered in the first half of the class (led by Ann) and the second to the second half of the class (led by Ed). In each project you should propose an experiment (complete with details) that you could conduct. We hope that you will actually develop and conduct the research in the future.

During the class meeting of Week 5, you will present the first mini proposal (related to topics covered by Ann). During the class meeting of Week 10, you will present the second mini proposal (related to topics covered by Ed).

By the end of Week 6, you will submit a written report for your first project. By the end of Week 11, you will submit a written report for your second project. In each paper you first develop your idea and situate it within existing scientific knowledge, then propose an experiment to test your idea and present hypothetical results, and finally discuss future directions. The main body of each paper should be no more than 1,000 words (see as an example, the Short Reports in *Psychological Science*). We will provide a Short Report example and template for you to follow.

Course Schedule and Reading List

READING LIST FOR FIRST HALF:

These readings have been chosen to introduce you to relatively recent consumer research on popular topics in the field. These articles are all from the *Journal of Consumer Research*, which is an interdisciplinary journal with articles drawing on base literatures in psychology, anthropology, sociology, economics, statistics, and more. However, I have sampled almost exclusively articles that look at psychological processes. As with all papers discussed in this course, none are perfect but you should consider both their strengths and weaknesses. Note also that several papers from week 1 are co-authored by me and I am well aware of their flaws: Don't worry about pointing them out in our discussions!

Week 1 (April 1): Anthropomorphism in Consumer Judgment and Behavior

Aggarwal, Pankaj and Ann L. McGill (2007), "Is That Car Smiling at Me? Schema Congruity as a Basis for Evaluating Anthropomorphized Products," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34(4), 468-479.

Kim, Sara and Ann L. McGill (2011), "Gaming with Mr. Slot or Gaming on the Slot Machine? Power, Anthropomorphism, and Risk Perception" *Journal of Consumer Research*, 38(1), 94-107.

Kim, Hyeong-Min and Thomas Kramer (2015), "Do Materialists Want to Be Masters of Brands? The Interactive Effect of Anthropomorphized Brand Roles and Materialism on Consumer Responses," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 42(2), 284-299.

- Kim, Hye-young, and Ann L. McGill (2018) "Minions for the Rich? Financial Status Changes How Consumers See Products with Anthropomorphic Features," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 45 (August), 429-450.
- Fournier, Susan (1998), "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (March), 343-73.
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Week 2 (April 8): Numerosity

These articles are available on the website for the Journal of Consumer Research: ejcr.org. Look under "Research Curations" on the lower half of the home page. You may download the articles if you are signed in on campus or connected via VPN. These articles are also available on ejcr.org under "Research Curations." In addition to the six articles, please also read the commentary by Rashmi Adaval, the JCR associate editor who assembled them.

- How to Make a 29% Increase Look Bigger: The Unit Effect in Option Comparisons by Pandleare, Briers, and Lembregts
 - Illusionary Progress in Loyalty Programs: Magnitudes, Reward Distances, and Step-Size Ambiguity by Bagchi and Li
 - Years, Months, and Days versus 1, 12, and 365: The Influence of Units versus Numbers by Monga and Bagchi
 - How and Why 1 Year Differs from 365 Days: A Conversational Logic Analysis of Inferences from the Granularity of Quantitative Expressions by Zhang and Schwarz
 - Small Sounds, Big Deals: Phonetic Symbolism Effects in Pricing by Coulter and Coulter
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Week 3 (April 15): Food Decision-Making

These articles are also available on ejcr.org under "Research Curations." In addition to the five articles, please also read the commentary by Lauren Block, the JCR associate editor who assembled them.

- Guiltless Gluttony: The Asymmetric Effect of Size Labels on Size Perceptions and Consumption by Aydinoglu and Krishna
 - Plate Size and Color Suggestibility: The Delboeuf Illusion's Bias on Serving and Eating Behavior by Van Ittersum and Wansink
 - When Healthy Food Makes You Hungry by Finkelstein and Fishbach
 - The Impact of Product Name on Dieters' and Nondieters' Food Evaluations and Consumption by Irmak, Vallen, and Robinson
 - I'll Have What She's Having: Effects of Social Influence and Body Type on Food Choices of Others by McFerran, Dahl, Fitzsimons, and Morales
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Week 4 (April 22): Social Influences and Consumer Behavior

These articles are also available on ejcr.org under "Research Curations." In addition to the five articles, please also read the commentary by Darren Dahl, the JCR associate editor who assembled them. (Darren was later the editor-in-chief of JCR.)

- When Imitation Doesn't Flatter: The Role of Consumer Distinctiveness in Response to Mimicry by White and Argo
 - Show Me the Honey! Effects of Social Exclusion on Financial Risk Taking by Duclos, Wen Wan, and Jiang
 - Influence via Comparison-Driven Self-Evaluation and Restoration: The Case of the Low-Status Influencer by Shalev and Morwitz
 - Getting Ahead of the Joneses: When Equality Increases Conspicuous Consumption among Bottom-Tier Consumers by Ordabayeva and Chandon
 - Are Close Friends the Enemy? Online Social Networks, Self-Esteem, and Self-Control by Wilcox and Stephen
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Week 5 (April 29):

Research presentations

READING LIST FOR SECOND HALF (*check back before Week 6 kicks off! Readings subject to change until then):

These readings sample current topics related to the psychology of real-time experience. The structure and goals of our discussions will remain the same as in the first half of the course.

Week 6 (May 6): Hedonic adaptation

- Chugani, S. K., Irwin, J. R., & Redden, J. P. (2015). Happily ever after: Hedonic adaptation and identity-consistent stimuli. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 42, 564-577.
 - O'Brien, E. (2019). Enjoy it again: Repeat experiences are less repetitive than people think. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 116, 519-540.
 - O'Brien, E., & Kassirer, S. (2019). People are slow to adapt to the warm glow of giving. *Psychological Science*, 30, 193-204.
 - O'Brien, E., & Smith, R. W. (2019). Unconventional consumption methods and enjoying things consumed: Recapturing the "first time" experience. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 45, 67-80.
 - Yang, Y., & Galak, J. (2015). Sentimental value and its influence on hedonic adaptation. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 109, 767-790.
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Week 7 (May 13): Change perception

- Bechler, C.J., Tormala, Z.L., & Rucker, D.D. (2019). Perceiving attitude change: How qualitative shifts augment change perception. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 82, 160-175.
- Davidai, S. (2018). Why do Americans believe in economic mobility? Economic inequality, external attributions of wealth and poverty, and the belief in economic mobility. *Journal*

of Experimental Social Psychology, 79, 138-148.

- O'Brien, E. (under review). The "next" effect: Psychological costs of technological advancement and other ever-better futures.
- O'Brien, E. (in preparation). Context effects on perceived improvement: When good is the enemy of better.
- O'Brien, E. (in preparation). Incentives and overcoming adversity.

Week 8 (May 20): Selective attention

- Klein, N., & O'Brien, E. (2018). People use less information than they think to make up their minds. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 115, 13222-13227.
- Levari, D.E., Gilbert, D.T., Wilson, T.D., Sievers, B., Amodio, D.M., & Wheatley, T. (2018). Prevalence-induced concept change in human judgment. *Science*, 360, 1465-1467.
- Morewedge, C., Zhu, M., & Buechel, E. C. (2018). Hedonic contrast effects are larger when comparisons are social. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 46, 286-302.
- O'Brien, E., & Klein, N. (2017). The tipping point of perceived change: Asymmetric thresholds in diagnosing improvement versus decline. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 112, 161-185.
- Yang, H., Carmon, Z., Ariely, D., & Norton, M. I. (2019). The feeling of not knowing it all. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 29, 455-462.

Week 9 (May 27): Designing optimal experiences

- Boothby, E. J., Cooney, G., Sandstrom, G. M., & Clark, M. S. (2018). The liking gap in conversations: Do people like us more than we think? *Psychological Science*, 29, 1742-1756.
- Kardas, M., Schroeder, J., & O'Brien, E. (under review). Keep talking: (Mis)Understanding the hedonic trajectory of conversation.
- Quoidbach, J., Taquet, M., Desselles, M., de Montjoye, Y. & Gross, J. (2019). Happiness and social behavior. *Psychological Science*, 30, 1111-1122.
- Weidman, A. C., Sun, J., Vazire, S., Quoidbach, J., Ungar, L. H., & Dunn, E. W. (in press). (Not) hearing happiness: Predicting fluctuations in happy mood from acoustic cues using machine learning. *Emotion*.
- White, M., & O'Brien, E. (in preparation). Hurting by helping.

Week 10 (June 3):

Research presentations