cba
COLLEGE OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH

Standard Course Outline

Title: Understanding the Social Lives of Brands

I. General Information

Course Number	GBA 646
Title	Understanding the Social Lives of Brands
Units	3.0 credits
Prerequisites	MBA standing, MKTG615.
Course Coordinator	Assistant Professor Risto Moisio
SCO Prepared by	Assistant Professor Risto Moisio
Date prepared/revised	January 2011

II. Catalog Description

This brand-centered marketing course intends to develop an integrated understanding of brands as cultural products and their relationship to consumers in product usage contexts. Consideration of the relationship between brand usage contexts and brand equity. Solving of brand-centric problems and developments decisions in marketing. Course utilizing sophisticated case analysis, brand-centric research projects including advanced multi-method qualitative as well as quantitative methodologies and in-class discussion. Application of branding principles and consumer behavior theories to understand the relationships between marketing, brands, and consumer behavior.

III. Curriculum Justifications

The curriculum is intended to give graduate students the necessary marketing skill level to be able to:

(1) analyze a brand as a cultural product,

(2) devise realistic and feasible methodology to study the value of brands to consumers, and
(3) implement your methodology, analyze data, and based on results suggest a specific course of action or strategy so as to improve brand equity.

The course has four main components to choose from that would allow each individual's analytic talents to emerge: (1) lecture, (2) problem-solving exercises, (3) case analyses using HBR (Harvard Business School) cases or other equivalent level cases, (4) collecting brand and consumer-centric data, and (5) preparing a report that synthesizes based on collected data understanding of a chosen brand and its future growth opportunities. Class participants will have to think at various levels to maximize their learning experience including at the levels of Marketing Manager, Brand manager, and most importantly - the consumer.

IV. Broad MBA-Program Level Learning Objectives (Assessment)

The course will assess two different types of MBA program learning objectives:
a) *Critical Thinking*. Students' skills in evaluating brand from a cultural point of view should be assessed in this course. Specifically, critical skills refer to the abilities ' of students to analyze a) how a brand intersects with broader popular cultural narrative and b) how a brand becomes valuable as a function of its ability to help consumers address deeper existential anxieties in relation to a society's prevailing ideology.
b) *Technical Skills*. Students' broader, technical, cultural branding analysis skills should also be assessed in this course. Assessment should evaluate the extent to which students have acquired qualitative, rather than quantitatively based skills in assessing a brand's value. Specifically, technical skills refer to the abilities of students to extract broader, more abstract insights about brand's value from qualitative brand-related stories as manifest in a) consumer data, b) branding/firm level data, c) influencer data, and d) popular culture data.

V. Specific Content-Specific Course Objectives

Skill- and Content-specific Goals of this module are:

Cultural branding:
1. Acquire the perspective of brands as social and cultural artifacts.
2. Learn how marketing and cultural environment shapes consumers' view of a brand.

Brands and Consumer Behavior:

1. Acquire familiarity with theories of brand attitude formation, brand-related memory, and brad knowledge, as well as social influences on brand use and choices.
2. Learn the relevance and how to apply consumer behavior theories to understand foundations of brand equity.

Cultural Branding Analysis - Qualitative Brand Research:
1. Familiarize yourself with several cutting edge qualitative research methods.
2. Acquire skills in using multiple qualitative research methods.
3. Gain experience in analyzing qualitative research methods and integrating the insights into brand managerial insights.

VI. Outline of Subject Matter

This is a listing of the subject matter that must be covered in this course. It does not preclude other topics that are part of the area or the depth of some topics. As this class is a seminar class, all the materials used are case studies for class participation and discussion as well as examples/simulations from the chosen textbooks.

The topical outline for the module is the following:

Week	Concept	Topics	<u>Possible</u> Active Learning Tools
1	**Understanding the Social Lives of Brands – Introduction & Class Overview**	Cultural branding; Cultural branding analysis	HBR Case
2	**Brands as Brand Culture: The Four Authors Framework**	Iconic brands; brand identity; consumer identity	Readings
3	**Brand Culture and Narrativity**	Marketplace culture and brand narratives; Role of marketing communications	Assignment
4	**Qualitative Methods in Cultural Branding Analysis**	Qualitative Research Methods; semi-structured interviews; focus groups; projective techniques	Assignment
5	**Consumer and Brand Narrative-Mediated Motivations**	Motivation; consumer goals; identity myths and projects	
6	**Attention in Brand Narrative-Crowded Markets**	Attention; Perception	HBR Case
7	**Research Design for Cultural Branding Analysis**	Qualitative Research Methods; semi-structured interviews; focus groups; projective techniques	Readings
8	**Mid-term exam**	-	Take-Home Exam

9	**Brand Knowledge & Memory**	Brand equity; Positioning strategies; memory	HBR case
10	**Analysis of Cultural Branding Data**	Grounded theory; Thematic analysis and coding	Assignment
11	**Formation of Brand Attitudes**	Persuasion & Attitude models; ELM; attitude change strategies	Readings
12	**Commercial and Brand Relationships**	Satisfaction formation; Customer equity	HBR Case
13	**Social Influences on Brand Relationships**	Customer acquisition & retention; social and cultural influences	HBR Case
14	**Protecting Brand Culture**	Brand as intellectual property	HBR Case
15	**Presentations**	-	-
16	**Final Exam**	-	Take-Home Exam

VII. Methods of Instruction

When reading the book in preparation for class it is essential that the students take an *active* approach. This means that the students implement the examples discussed in the book and work through them as they read. *The best-prepared student is often the one who comes to class with questions about how the concepts and methods can be applied.* Finally, the students should expect to return to the book after class or while reviewing, in order to refine and consolidate their knowledge.

A class project, as a learning tool, provides the student with opportunities to apply and practice the skills and concepts that they have learned in the first part of the course. Another active learning approach is the use of HBR-level case discussion and written analysis. **At this level of instruction, MBA students must have some type of pedagogical tools for active learning that are beyond the undergraduate level of lecture and multiple choice examinations.**

Instructors in planning the exams, and other grading procedures, should adhere to the relevant University Policy on "Grades, Grading Procedures, and Final Assessments, Final Course."

The textbooks for this course should be chosen in accordance with the University Policy on textbooks. There are many appropriate textbooks for this course; it is generally agreed that none of them is perfect. The following suggestion is based on the special nature of this core MBA course:

- o Students will arrive at this course with extraordinary range of backgrounds; and therefore prior knowledge will be highly variable, however,

- o Students will have a level of maturity that will enable them to look at a broader picture via more advanced cases, simulations, group projects and

- o Any textbook used for this course **must** be a MBA-level, graduate textbook.

      o   Examinations **must** be essay-type and/or problem solving questions and avoid the use of multiple-choice questions.

Some possible textbooks include the following:

<u>Main Textbook(s):</u>

- Douglas B. Holt (2004). How Brands Become Icons. Harvard Business School Press.

- Hoyer and MacInnis (2010). Consumer Behavior. 5th ed. Houghton-Mifflin.

- Grant McCracken (2005). Culture and Consumption II: Markets, Meaning, and Brand Management. Indiana University Press.

- Grant McCracken (2009). Chief Culture Officer: How to Create a Living, Breathing Corporation. Basic Books.

<u>Cases:</u>

Harvard Business School cases, Ivey Business School cases, or other advanced level cases that focus on a business problem from multiple perspectives.

VIII. Instructional Policy Requirements

The students are expected to comply with the universally accepted norms of considerate and courteous behavior, and with all University rules and policies found in the current [University Catalog](#), including the [Withdrawal Policy](#) and [Policy on Cheating and Plagiarism](#), It will be assumed that the students will adhere to the tenets of *academic integrity* as articulated in [Dean's Letter on Academic Integrity](#) throughout this course. Instructors may specify their own policies with regard to plagiarism, withdrawal, absences, etc. as long as these policies are consistent with the above mentioned University polices.

It is expected that all students to attend classes regularly and to be responsible from all materials covered in class, regardless of their attendance. Make-up exams are strongly discouraged and will only be given with documented proof of an excused absence. Acceptability of the excuse will be determined based on the appropriateness of the documents. It is important that the student provides all documentation without special prompting from the instructor. The student should give earliest possible notification of an anticipated excused absence. The students refer to [the specific university policy](#) on these issues.

Occasionally adjustments in the course assignments become necessary. The students should be notified about changes, if any, and, whenever possible, they should be consulted in advance about any changes.

Students with Disabilities: Students with disabilities are responsible for notifying their instructor as early as possible of their needs for an accommodation of a verified disability. A student with a disability is urged to consult with Disabled Student Services as soon as possible in order to identify possible accommodations to enhance academic success.