

Herbert Jack Rotfeld's syllabi used the following verbiage for undergraduate & graduate elective Marketing courses at Auburn University. The specific boring details for everything else used in the undergraduate courses can be viewed at:¹

1. Misplaced Marketing & Consumers' Interests

marketing & public policy & related distractions

<http://webhome.auburn.edu/~rotfehj/syl-4050.html>

2. Consumer Behavior

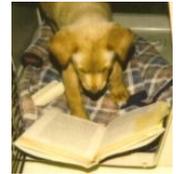
trying to figure out what consumers might do

<http://webhome.auburn.edu/~rotfehj/syl-4410.html>

3. Advertising

advertising, publicity, sales promotion & other stuff

<http://webhome.auburn.edu/~rotfehj/syl-432.html>



Required textbook: NONE! All options reviewed were a collection of logical inconsistencies, self-contradictions and authors' vexing inability to delete descriptions of business practices that ended in the last century, while retaining elaboration on theories that have long-since been falsified in the research literature. Instead of providing content that could lead to substantive class discussions, textbooks were written to provide instructors with slides to read to the class and data banks for multiple choice tests (see <http://webhome.auburn.edu/~rotfehj/TextbookEffect.pdf>).

Instead of a textbook, there will be a less expensive book that isn't filled with irrelevant distracting pictures, cartoons, graphs or meaningless charts. It just has a lot of words to be read, including some interesting comments. At worst, reading the book might provide a drug-free cure for student insomnia. There are also some essays and videos linked to this syllabus, plus email lecture supplements sent out after most class meetings. Because too many students go through years of college education foolishly clinging to the mistaken idea that copying from the screen is the same as taking notes on a class meeting, students are required to buy packets that contain all on-screen verbiage, thereby enabling everyone to take what should be the important class notes that would help them remember and learn the lessons conveyed in the discussions.

All class slides will provide illustrations designed to assist in understanding course content: no slides from a book's publisher-provided collections will be used; no slide will be read to the class; and no test will ask for a recitation of a list. If there are any big words in the syllabus or assigned readings that you don't understand, it's assumed you haven't lost your phone.

TRIGGER WARNING is necessary because **marketing practitioners** are rarely, if ever, the same types of people as their customers, with decision options that must be evaluated in terms of what interests the market segments, not in terms of what personally appeals to the decision maker. The job often requires that they deal with products or consumer choices with which they personally disagree. Similarly, class will discuss products or services you would never buy, product features you'd never need, and mass media messages which would never consider you as part of the target segment, resulting in classes discussing examples that you might find personally offensive. In a marketing class, the same as in the reality outside campus, it is unavoidable. In addition, many video segments will be shown in class because they explain course content in an entertaining fashion that is beyond the charisma-challenged instructor's capabilities. Because college students over 18-years-old are legal adults, the video segments are not censored to prevent their exposure to brief scatological references, common expletives that might be heard on broadcast or commercial cable-TV networks, coarse slang that children repeat without understanding, and formerly innocent metaphors or acronyms whose contemporary coital innuendoes might not be discerned by anyone who hasn't read the latest updates of Urban Dictionary definitions



The fact that marketing managers are rarely members of their target segments does not create bad decisions, but any manager's inability to realize that the fact exists does. In any marketing class, students can no longer view products or services as a customer purchasing a jacket, part of the audience watching commercials in their video stream, or medical patients picking up their prescription drugs. Instead, they need to view consumers from the point of view of marketing managers whose customers make decisions for a variety of different reasons.

¹ Numbers 1, 2, 3 reference specific learning objectives in the box on p. 2.

Learning Objectives: Does having learning objectives improve a course? No one knows. No one asks. University policy says that every syllabus “must include clearly stated learning objectives,” so it is in this box, while faculty hope no one discovers we are making it up as we go along.

1. Learning Objectives for Misplaced Marketing and Consumers’ Interests are to engender a broader knowledge of the pragmatic social and regulatory environment of marketing decisions, viewed from a perspective of the difficulty of serving consumers' interests when a manager’s marketing perspective is lost, misapplied or abused. It's about marketing regulation, which requires a bit of law, but it isn't a law course. It's about business self-regulation, but it isn't about altruism. It's about marketing management decision making, but it isn't defined by specific marketing jobs. In addition to the powers and limitations of business self-regulation, discussions will look at work of government regulation by CFPB, FTC, FDA and other government agencies that pundits falsely claim "kills jobs" while ignoring that they are keeping the cannery from using poisonous diethylene glycol to preserve your peas (yes, that really happened), fighting pollution that can cause a [river to ignite in flames](#) (yes, this happened to the Cuyahoga River) or stopping banks from having another meltdown that saves money for billionaires while kicking grandma to the curb (e.g. 2008 Great Recession).

2. Learning Objectives for Consumer Behavior are developing students’ perspectives for understanding published research and theories that explain and predict how consumers respond to marketing strategies and tactics. It's not tied to any specific job, but engenders a basis to guide managers’ evaluations of their information on decision alternatives. Consumer behavior theories and research published in academic marketing journals can be broadly characterized as: 1) providing insightful perspectives for business decision making; or 2) pragmatically-useless yet academically-interesting studies that generate discussion among faculty and students; or 3) useless dung of the bovine that somehow gets published despite their logical inconsistencies, conceptual weirdness or absence of any confirmatory support in research data. Our class will try to stay focused on #1, sometimes with a side trip to #2, and whenever possible, derisively noting #3 by some socially acceptable expletive.

3. Objective for any Advertising course is creating a basis for understanding the business context for mass communications decisions, covering: the common business activities and terminology; perspectives applied when making optimal decisions; and the rationale behind common-but-less-than-optimal practices. If anyone signed up for the class because the title created an expectation of an entertaining semester of viewing Super Bowl commercials or revealing a “secret” formula for writing consumer-manipulating advertising copy, they were mistaken. The course should create a different perspective for students that they will no longer view mass media content as part of the audience watching television commercials, driving past billboards, or waiting for their online video choice to start, but instead, as managers trying to inform and persuade audiences.

All tests and assignments will require writing. As it is in life, nothing in the class will be multiple choice. If you are a good student that is tired of brain-dead classmates hurting your grade on a group project or presentation, there won't be any [group work](#) on [egalitarian team projects](#). Slackers or others who have managed to give themselves a pharmaceutical lobotomy yet often pass courses on the work of others are on their own. The primary requirement for the class is a functioning brain, preferably one that is not an example of the Dunning-Kruger Effect, as well as a willingness to use it for a critical evaluation of the plethora of questionable expansive statements that dominate the practitioners’ and public’s perception of marketing. Students proudly exhibiting their cerebral flat lines, plus other tuition-wasting education-avoiders who came to campus primarily devoted to parties, to cheer for sports teams, or to go to parties to cheer for teams, or who would rather be elsewhere but the family made them go to college, all would probably see the “How to Fail” sarcasm as a college work manual.

<http://webhome.auburn.edu/~rotfehj/how2fail.html>

[If you don't know what is meant by the Dunning-Kruger Effect and looked it up when you read it here without anyone telling you to do so, you'll probably enjoy the class.]

As per university policy, the comprehensive final exam will be administered at the assigned time. An earlier or delayed test will not be granted for students departing for family vacations, witnessing meteorological events, assisting a roommate recovering from an end-of-term bar crawl, sobering up from your own error of celebrating too soon, or going to meet a man or woman with two hearts who invited you to go on an adventure traveling throughout all space and time in a blue 1960s-era British police call box that the inside is bigger than the outside.

Classes will always start on time in the business sense of the term: at the time designated for the start of class, students are expected to be in their seats and ready to work. It is disrespectful to your classmates when you repeatedly drift in late and distract those present. In business, you get fired. On a sports team, you "miss the bus."