**Course Objectives**
This seminar is designed to familiarize students with the major research areas in consumer behavior. It is designed primarily for doctoral students in marketing, but is open to doctoral students in related disciplines (e.g., psychology, organizational behavior). The overall goal of the seminar is to help students acquire knowledge about key theories and methods in consumer behavior – which can be used to develop their own programs of research.

By the end of this seminar, you should:
(1) Acquire a broad foundation of knowledge in different areas of consumer behavior (*breadth*).
(2) Develop an original research project in an area of consumer behavior of interest (*depth*).
(3) Learn how to write, review, and present consumer research (*practical*).

**Course Structure**
This course follows a seminar format, with the learning objectives reached through a combination of lecture, class discussion, one-on-one coaching, assignments, and developing/presenting a research project. Each class session will begin with a short lecture by the professor providing a framework for the assigned articles. The student discussion leader for the day will then lead a dialog on the assigned articles. The professor will moderate the discussion, integrate student comments, and summarize key learning points. There are two take-home assignments during the semester, one on reviewing, and the other on insights from consumer research. During the semester, each student will develop an in-depth research paper on a topic of interest. Students are encouraged to meet individually with the professor to discuss their research ideas. Students will present a first draft of their research paper in class on October 17, and the final version will be presented in class on Nov 28. The written final research paper is due by email on Dec 9.

**Course Materials**
There is a required course pack which can be picked up at Copie 2000, 1115 Sherbrooke West (corner Peel & Sherbrooke). The readings in the course pack are primarily articles from journals such as *Journal of Consumer Research, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of Marketing, Journal of Consumer Psychology, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, and American Psychologist*. 
For further reading into topics of particular interest to you, I recommend the following books which are available for loan at the McLennan Library of McGill University:

*Consumer Behavior, 5th. edition, by Hoyer and MacInnis, Southwestern Publishing*


- **Course Grade**
  The final grade in this seminar will be weighted as follows:
  - **Class Participation**: 20%
  - **Discussion Leadership**: 10%
  - **Mid-Term Research Paper Presentation**: 10%
  - **Final Research Paper Presentation**: 10%
  - **Final Written Research Paper**: 40%
  - **Reviewer Assignment (written)**: 10%
  - **Customer Insights Assignment (presentation)**: Feedback only

**Class Participation (20%)**
The breadth objective of the course will be achieved through discussion in the weekly class meetings. Each week we will discuss a different topic in consumer behavior, drawing from readings in marketing and psychology. The readings have been selected to represent important theories and methods. Students are expected to have read all the assigned readings before coming to class, and to be prepared to discuss the readings in class.

Class participation will be facilitated by discussion questions to be submitted by each student in advance of class. Students must read the assigned articles for the upcoming class, and email three discussion questions to the professor before 5 pm of the Saturday preceding the class. Submission of discussion questions will begin with the class on Sep 19, i.e., the first set of discussion questions must be submitted by Saturday, Sep 15. Note that there are no discussion questions due for the class on Nov 7; instead, the reviewer assignment is due on Nov 7. Discussion questions can pertain to broad integrative issues across articles in the session, as well as issues specific to a particular article. Guidelines for writing discussion questions are appended to this course outline (see Appendix 1), and examples of discussion questions will also be circulated in class. After receiving students’ discussion questions, the professor will email a selected subset of discussion questions to all students on Saturday night – this subset of questions will act as the basis for in-class discussion during class on Wednesday. Class participation will be measured by the quality of the discussion questions submitted in advance of each class, and the quality of oral participation during class.

**Discussion Leadership (10%)**
The depth objective of the course will be partly achieved through discussion leadership. Each student will act as the discussion leader for at least one class (or more) over the course of the seminar. Discussion leaders will be appointed during the first class session, and each class session from Sep 19 onwards (except Nov 7) will have discussion leaders. Before coming to the first class on Sep 5, please skim the topics to be covered in the seminar (listed in this course outline), and make a shortlist of class sessions where you would like to be the discussion leader. Guidelines for discussion leadership are appended to this course outline (see Appendix 2).
**Mid-Term Research Paper Presentation (10%)**
The depth objective of the course will be further accomplished by a research paper. Students can develop a research paper on any consumer behavior topic covered in this seminar. Students can also work on topics not covered in the seminar with permission of the professor. Students will present a first draft of their research paper to the class in the middle of the semester (i.e., Oct 17) for feedback from the professor and fellow students. Guidelines for writing (see Appendix 3) and presenting (see Appendix 4) the research project are given in the appendix.

**Final Research Paper Presentation (10%)**
Students will present a final version of their research paper at the end of the semester (i.e., Nov 28) for further feedback from the professor and fellow students. Guidelines for writing (see Appendix 3) and presenting (see Appendix 4) the research project are given in the appendix.

**Final Written Research Paper (40%)**
The final written research paper, incorporating feedback from the mid-term and final presentations, is due approximately 10 days after the final presentation (i.e., on Dec 9). Guidelines for writing the research project are given in the appendix (see Appendix 3). To help students learn from each other, final written papers will be circulated by the professor to all the students in the class.

**Reviewer Assignment (10%)**
A practical objective of this course is to develop the ability to review other researcher’s manuscripts, and to write one’s own research clearly in a scientific style. Skill in reviewing and writing usually develops incrementally during one’s academic career, though the process of receiving reviews from journals, being asked to review by journals and conferences, writing your own research manuscripts, getting feedback from other faculty, and presenting your research at conferences.

In the present seminar, we will take a more direct approach to improving reviewing skills via a class session on reviewing, and a take-home reviewing assignment. In this assignment, students will play the role of reviewer for a manuscript under submission to a top-tier behavioural journal, such as the *Journal of Consumer Research*. Students will be given a “real” manuscript which has gone through the review process at the *Journal of Consumer Research*, and asked to provide a detailed and constructive review. Students will have one week to complete this assignment. Details of the assignment will be provided in class on Oct 31, and this written assignment is due by email before 9am on Nov 7.

**Customer Insight Assignment (Feedback only)**
This is a take home assignment based on the book “Consumer Insights: Findings from Behavioral Research.” This book provides a succinct summary of robust (i.e., reliable) findings in consumer research that are likely to be useful to managers. Students will be asked to choose one key finding discussed in the book, and explain this finding to other students through a short powerpoint presentation in class on September 12. The purpose of this assignment is help students gain an overview of robust findings in consumer research, and to practice their presentation skills. Details of the assignment will be provided in the first class on Sep 5. No
written submission is necessary for this assignment, but students need to email their powerpoint slides to the professor after class on Sep 12.

- **Academic Integrity**
  McGill University values integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism, and other academic offences under the Code of Student & Disciplinary Procedures. Please see [www.mcgill.ca/integrity](http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity) for more information.
## Class Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sep 5</td>
<td>Overview of Consumer Behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sep 12</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Consumer Insights Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sep 19</td>
<td>Perception &amp; Attention</td>
<td>Guest Speaker Librarian, McGill University: “Using Library Resources for Academic Research”</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sep 26</td>
<td>Knowledge &amp; Inference</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Memory</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Oct 10</td>
<td>Attitudes I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 17</td>
<td>Attitudes II</td>
<td>Mid-Term Research Paper Presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 24</td>
<td>Behavioral Decision Theory</td>
<td>Guest Speaker Prof. Anne-Sophie Chaxel, McGill University: “Preference-Driven Biases in Consumer Search and Evaluation of Online Reviews”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 31</td>
<td>Affect</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 7</td>
<td>Writing / Reviewing Research &amp; Academic Job Market</td>
<td>Reviewer Assignment</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 14</td>
<td>Social &amp; Consumption Influences</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Nov 21</td>
<td>Self Control</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Nov 28</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Research Paper Presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Final Written Research Papers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The required readings for each topic are listed below.
- In addition to the required readings (which are in the course pack), further readings on each topic are also listed for students particularly interested in that topic.

### WEEK 1 (Sep 5)  OVERVIEW OF CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

#### Required Readings


**Additional Readings**


**WEEK 2 (Sept 12) – MOTIVATION**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


**WEEK 3 (Sept. 19) PERCEPTION & ATTENTION**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


**WEEK 4 (Sept. 26) KNOWLEDGE & INFERENC**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


Gregan-Paxton, Jennifer, and Deborah Roedder John (1997), “Consumer Learning by Analogy: A Model of Internal...


**WEEK 5 (Oct 3) MEMORY**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


**WEEK 6 (Oct. 10)  ATTITUDES I**

**Required Readings**


*Assignment: Visit [https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/selectatest.html](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/selectatest.html) and take IAT tests on Gender-Career and Age IAT. Incorporate your reactions into commentary for the day.*

**Additional Readings**


**WEEK 7 (Oct. 17) ATTITUDES II**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


Research, 16 (December), 289-300.


**WEEK 8 (Oct. 24) **BEHAVIORAL DECISION THEORY

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


**WEEK 9 (Oct 31) AFFECT**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


WEEK 10 (Nov 7) WRITING & CRITIQUING RESEARCH

Required Readings


JCR Review Process / Manuscripts & Reviews

Additional Readings


- JCR Best Article Award

WEEK 11 (Nov 14) SOCIAL & CONSUMPTION INFLUENCES

Required Readings


Additional Readings


**WEEK 12 (Nov 21) SELF CONTROL**

**Required Readings**


**Additional Readings**


Appendix 1

Guidelines for Discussion Questions

The value of this seminar is maximized when students read assigned articles in a critical manner, and are prepared to discuss the articles in class. Discussion questions are designed to help students read articles in depth before coming to class.

You should read the assigned articles for a class, and submit three discussion questions by 5 pm of the Saturday preceding the class. Submission of discussion questions will start with the class on Sep 19, i.e., the first set of discussion questions must be submitted by Saturday, Sep 15. There are no discussion questions due for the class on Nov 7; instead, your take-home reviewer assignment is due on Nov 7. Please email your discussion questions to ashesh.mukherjee@mcgill.ca. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your email; save this acknowledgement to ensure that your submission has been received.

Broadly speaking, there are three types of discussion questions: (a) critically assess an article, (b) integrate across two or more articles, and (c) propose a future research study. Notably, these are also the types of questions that reviewers raise, and authors address in their own research. Hence, writing good discussion questions will improve your effectiveness as a reviewer and author. Below, I discuss the three types of discussion questions.

**Critically Assess a Research Article**

This type of question addresses issues such as:

- Is the literature review accurate and complete?
- Does the article clearly identify a gap in past research?
- Do the hypotheses follow logically from the literature review/theoretical development?
- Does the methodology permit a strong test of the hypotheses?
- How well do the authors manipulate the independent variables in their hypotheses? Are these manipulations confounded with extraneous variables (i.e., are the manipulations “clean”)?
- How well do the authors measure the dependent variables in their hypotheses? Are these measurements reliable (i.e., coefficient alpha)?
- Do the empirical results permit the authors to reach firm conclusions?
- Are the limitations of the research addressed adequately?
- The article makes the case that variable X has an effect on variable Y. What are some moderators that might strengthen, weaken, or reverse this effect?
- What are the net contributions of this paper (theoretical and methodological)? Are the contributions significant given previous research on this topic? For further insight into this question, see the section on research contributions in the appendix titled “guidelines for research proposal.”
**Integrate Across Research Articles**
This type of question addresses issues such as:

- What are the areas of agreement (similarities), and disagreement (dissimilarities) across research articles?
- There is a conflict between the findings of Article A and Article B, e.g., Article A finds X, but Article B finds Y. How would you reconcile these contradictory findings?
- What is the relationship between the two theories (e.g., Theory X and Theory Y) that both seek to explain the same phenomenon? Are they contradictory? Complementary?
- Compare and contrast the two constructs (e.g., construct X and construct Y) that appear to be similar. Which construct is more useful, and why?

**Propose a Future Research Study**
This type of question addresses issues such as:

- Design a research study that would test the mechanism underlying an article.
- Design a research study that would test new moderators relevant to an article.
- Design a research study that would test a new theory relevant to an article.
- Design a research study that would overcome a key limitation of an article.
- Design a research study that would resolve an inconsistency across two articles.

More examples of discussion questions will be circulated in the class.

Before coming to class, it is important that you **prepare your answers** to your own discussion questions, as well as discussion questions submitted by other students. In other words, don’t propose a discussion question to which you don’t have a possible answer; and try to think of possible answers to other students’ discussion questions. It will be helpful to make informal notes summarizing your proposed answers to the discussion questions – you can refer to these notes when participating in class. When answering discussion questions, try to be constructive, i.e., think of ways to **solve the problem** identified in the question – either by proposing further analysis of data in the current article (give details), or conducting a new study (give details). **Do not simply criticize, without offering a solution.**
Appendix 2

Guidelines for Discussion Leadership

The discussion leader will prepare a two page (single-spaced, double sided) summary of each article assigned for that session. The first page should show the boxes-and-arrows model tested in the article, with the hypotheses (H1, H2 etc) stated below the model. The second page should contain (in bulleted form), the main findings/contributions of the article. The discussion leader should make photocopies of these summaries, and distribute these summaries to other students at the beginning of class. The summaries will be a useful memory aid later, for quickly reviewing the main findings in that area of research. The summaries will be especially useful when you are preparing for your comprehensive exam at the end of the second year.

The discussion leader should prepare powerpoint slides as an aid to class discussion. These slides should be brought to class on a USB memory stick to be used on the professor’s laptop. The leader can start with any article assigned for the day. First, the discussion leader should give a short summary of that article (< 2 minutes), in the form of a boxes-and-arrows model together with hypotheses. Second, the leader will pick one discussion question relevant to this article (from any of the circulated questions), and invite responses from others in the class. Thereafter, the discussion leader will interact with others in the class to make sure that the discussion question has been answered properly. As emphasized earlier, students should try to answer the discussion questions in a constructive manner, i.e., think of ways to solve the problem identified in the question – either by proposing further analysis of data in the current article (give details), or conducting a new study (give details). It is especially important for the discussion leader to propose future research ideas. The discussion leader should spell out in detail at least one future research study that would make a contribution to the topic of discussion for the day. It is also important to point out during the discussion what are the research contributions of each article (theoretical and methodological). In other words, what was good about the article? To understand research contributions further, please read the guidelines for the research paper.

The above process should be repeated for each of the assigned articles. The discussion leader should plan to cover all the required readings in the class discussion (i.e., at least one discussion question from each article).

For more insight, the discussion leader is welcome to consult other articles relevant to the topic, such as those listed in the additional readings section plus other articles in top-tier journals.

The quality of discussion leadership will be measured by the leader’s article summaries, the leader’s own responses to discussion questions, the leader’s ability to coordinate comments made by other students, and the leader’s proposed future research study.
Appendix 3

Guidelines for Research Paper

Your research paper may be based on any of the topics covered in this seminar. Your research paper can also be based on consumer behavior topics not covered in this seminar after getting permission from the professor. If you want to take the latter approach, please discuss with the professor before starting work.

Starting Work
At the beginning of the seminar, you should skim all the topics that will be covered during the semester, and pick topics that are of particular interest to you. Then, read the articles in these topic areas before they are covered in class, including the additional readings suggested for those sessions. Students should also read recent issues of *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, and re-read articles from earlier consumer behaviour or psychology seminars. Note that you can browse the table of contents of marketing and psychology journals from the AMA (American Marketing Association) website: [http://www.marketingpower.com](http://www.marketingpower.com), and also from the McGill Library website. You should also read business magazines (e.g., Business Week / Advertising Age), and general interest magazines (e.g., New Yorker, Harpers) for real world examples to motivate your research.

Based on the above readings, you need to come up with research questions that you will answer in your project. In fact, you should come up with multiple research questions/answers (at least 2 research questions/answers). All students are required to take an appointment and meet with the professor within the first two weeks of class to discuss their research questions/answers. The professor will help clarify your thinking, and help you pick a research question/answer to focus on for the rest of the semester. Note that your research project in this seminar should fit into your broader streams of research, as outlined in your CV. We will discuss this issue further in class, in the context of developing your academic CV.

You can also choose to take an existing project that you have already worked on, and try to extend it further as your research paper in this seminar. If you want to take this latter route, please meet with the professor in the first week of class. Before your meeting, you should forward a manuscript summarizing your previous work, and outlining the further research questions/answers that you would like to investigate. The professor will help clarify your thinking, and pick a research question/answer that you will focus on during the rest of the semester.

First Meeting
Students need to take an appointment and meet with the professor within the first 2 weeks of class. Students should come to this meeting prepared to discuss at least 2 research questions/answers that they have thought of. Ideally, you should be able to explain each of your research questions/answers to the professor in the following way: (i) Start with real life examples, (ii) Ask a question in simple language, (iii) Propose an answer to your question in simple language (your answer should be surprising in some way), (iv) Give an intuitive reason why you think your answer is likely to be true, (v) Formalize your answer in the form of research hypotheses (i.e., H1, H2..), (vi) identity a theory in consumer behavior or psychology that helps support your proposed hypotheses, (vii) summarize your hypotheses in the form of a “boxes-and-
arrows” model (viii) describe a study you would conduct to test your hypotheses, (ix) briefly outline your proposed data analysis, and (x) point out the contributions of your research (theoretical, methodological, substantive). Don’t worry if you haven’t thought through everything – just prepare for the meeting as best as you can, and the professor will help you think through your ideas.

After the first meeting (and subsequent meetings as necessary), the student will select one research question/answer to focus on for the rest of the semester. Your objective is to develop this research idea into a final paper which is due at the end of the semester.

**Final Paper**
The final research paper should be approximately twenty pages, double-spaced (including references). This is the typical length of manuscripts submitted to the ACR annual conference. The proposal should contain the following sections:

i. **Introduction** (suggested: 1-2 pages).
   *This section should motivate the proposal by highlighting importance of the topic. Use real-life examples to start this section. After presenting your examples, state your question in simple language, and explain why this question is important. Then, state your proposed answer/s, and give intuitive reasons for your proposed answer. Note that “no one has studied this issue” should **not** be your main reason for undertaking the research. Minimize the use of jargon in the Introduction section. Point out the contributions (theoretical, methodological, substantive) of your paper. Note that the introduction should be a self-contained, broad summary of the paper as a whole.*

ii. **Theoretical development** (suggested: 8-9 pages).
   *The purpose of this section is to logically build up your hypotheses. The best way to write this section is to write your formal hypotheses first (i.e., H1, H2, etc). Then take each hypothesis in turn (e.g., H1), and logically justify why the hypothesis is likely to be true. In this logical justification, use a theory in consumer behavior/psychology to make your case. You should also summarize relevant past research, but only to the extent you need for your hypothesis at hand. Use subheadings and overviews of coming points - try to have a logical flow. Summarize the main points you want the reader to get. End this section with your formal hypotheses (H1, H2 etc). Note that hypotheses are usually a new main effect, or a new moderating effect. Hypotheses can also relate to the mechanism underlying your moderating or main effects. You should insert a boxes-and-arrows model summarizing your hypotheses.*

iii. **Methodology** (suggested: 5-6 pages)
   *This section should describe subjects, design, procedure, manipulation of independent/moderating variables, measurement of dependent/mediating variables, and manipulation checks. You can also include pilot studies if necessary (e.g., to develop stimuli for your main studies).*

iv. **Analysis Plan** (suggested: ½ page).
This section should contain a statistical analysis plan, including manipulation checks.

v. Results (suggested: blank)
Keep this section blank in your research proposal, since you will not have data by the end of this semester. However, it is recommended that you collect data in January, 2011 and then submit your manuscript to the ACR 2011 annual conference. After collecting data, you can write up the results using the following guidelines: (a) Present only results relevant to your hypotheses (b) Present your results by hypothesis (repeat hypothesis if necessary) or by major dependent variable, (c) Try to present results in some logical flow, (d) Use tables and figures, (e) If you have more than one study, briefly discuss the results of each study, followed by a transition to the next study (i.e., what is the purpose of the next study?).

This section should list theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions of your proposal. Use point-by-point form, i.e., First,.Second,..., Third,... etc. Theoretical contributions are usually (i) new independent variable/s, (ii) new moderating variable/s, and (iii) new mediating variable/s. Methodological contributions are usually (i) different manipulations of independent/moderating variables, (ii) new measures of dependent/mediating variables (including choice), (ii) testing in different product categories (iii) testing in different respondent populations, and (iv) field versus lab studies. Practical contributions are usually (i) Guidelines for managers, (ii) Guidelines for consumers, and (iii) Guidelines for policy makers.

vii. References (suggested: 1 page).
This section should contain no more than 10 references, formatted as in the Journal of Consumer Research.

viii. Appendices (no limit)
This section should contain (a) questionnaire/s used to collect data, (b) stimuli (e.g., ads, instructions) presented to participants, and (c) instructions to the research assistant conducting the study. Appendices do not count towards the 20 page limit for the research proposal.

ix. Abstract (suggested: 1 page)
The proposal should contain an upfront, one-page, double-spaced abstract, approximately 250 words. The abstract does not count towards the 20 page limit for the research proposal. The abstract should be followed by three keywords to classify the article. You can check the ACR conference submission website for a list of potential keywords.

The quality of your research paper will be measured by the completeness of each section, and especially by contributions to the literature. In addition, the proposal must be written clearly in a scientific style, as exemplified by articles in the Journal of Consumer Research. It is strongly
suggested (but not required) that students collect data based on their research proposal in January 2013, and submit the resulting manuscript as a paper at the annual conference of the *Association for Consumer Research* - deadline: March 10, 2013 (see [www.acrweb.org](http://www.acrweb.org)). Guidelines for presenting your research at conferences are appended to this course outline.

Note that your final research paper is due by 5 pm on Dec 9. Email your research proposal to ashesh.mukherjee@mcgill.ca. You will receive an acknowledgement of receipt of your submission within a day; please save this acknowledgement to ensure that your submission has been accepted.

**Mid-Term Presentation**

Students will present their research paper (work in progress) in class on October 17. Each student will have 20 minutes to present, followed by 10 minutes Q&A. This structure is similar to the 20 minute research presentations at academic conferences such as the *Association for Consumer Research*. Effective presentations are well organized, clearly spoken, and provide concise answers to audience questions. Guidelines for presenting at conferences are appended to this course outline; please follow these guidelines when preparing your mid-term presentation. Students will receive feedback after their mid-term presentations, both on the content of their research project as well as their presentation skills. This feedback should be used to further improve their research project as well as final presentation.

**Final Presentation**

Students will present their research paper (final version) again in class on November 28. Each student will have 20 minutes to present, followed by 10 minutes Q&A. This structure is similar to the 20 minute research presentations at academic conferences such as the *Association for Consumer Research*. Effective presentations are well organized, clearly spoken, and provide concise answers to audience questions. Guidelines for presenting at conferences are appended to this course outline; please follow these guidelines when preparing your final presentation. Students will receive feedback after their final presentations, both on the content of their research project as well as their presentation skills. This feedback should be used to further improve their research project before submitting the written paper on Dec 9.
Appendix 4

Guidelines for Conference Presentation

You will frequently present your research at academic conferences during your career. Your presentations in this seminar will give you practice for becoming an effective academic presenter at conferences. The main thing to remember when presenting at conferences is that you have a limited amount of time (typically 20-25 mins). So be succinct! You cannot describe all the details of your work. The most common mistake at conferences is overkill on the literature review. Although it is important to embed your work in the relevant literature, it is more important to convince your audience about the contributions of your research. This is best done by presenting your empirical work in more depth, summarizing your contributions at the end, and answering audience questions effectively.

Presentation slides should be uncluttered (i.e., few words/slide); a good rule of thumb is no more than 3 bullet points per slide, with one key phrase per bullet point. You should orally explain the words on the slides, i.e., discuss each slide in your own words. Do not read words that are already on the slide. Talk s-l-o-w-l-y, emphasizing key words. Try to use pictures and diagrams in your slides. The different parts of a presentation, with ballpark recommendations for time are:

1-2 minute  Title slide – Introduce yourself, your co-authors, tell the audience in one sentence what the research is about. Talk slowly.

1-2 minutes  The Question/Problem => Use examples – visual/pictures or tables/graphs. Building on the examples, state the general research question you are interested in. Explain why this question is important (for managers/consumers).

1-2 minutes  Your Answer => show your boxes and arrows “proposed model.” Explain your answer (i.e., model) in simple language. Say that you will now develop this model in the next couple of minutes.

3-4 minutes  Hypothesis development => Put up your “proposed model” again => state your formal hypotheses (H1, H2..) => state logic for each hypothesis => refer to past literature only to the extent it helps you develop your hypotheses => Point out the link between your hypotheses and your boxes-and-arrows model => Point out how your hypotheses extend past research, and how your hypotheses are interesting/surprising.

8-10 minutes  Empirical work => State your experimental design => Describe the procedure (what did participants do, step-by-step). Explain the manipulations/measures. Use pictures to illustrate manipulations. Use graphs wherever possible to show results (tables are hard to read). Keep more detailed results as backup to be used only if you get followup questions.

2-3 minutes  Contributions => State your theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions clearly (use bullet points).

1-2 minutes  Next steps => How will you follow up on this work? Thank audience, end.

Final advice: practice your talk many, many times in private, culminating in a formal dress rehearsal before a knowledgeable audience.