SAMPLE SYLLABUS

Prof. Thomaï Serdari  
MKTG-GB.2126.S16  
“The Core of Luxury: Processes, products, and strategies through history”

Course Objectives

As the core course for the Luxury Marketing specialization at Stern, this class is designed to provide students with an understanding of the fundamentals of luxury. When was the concept of luxury first articulated and what did it mean within its various manifestations? How did the products, consumer tastes, material exchanges, and producer strategies evolve through history? How has the luxury industry evolved through time and what is at its core?

According to a common dictum, a luxury brand is a bridge between the past and the future. By the end of this course students will have developed:

a. An understanding of the luxury segment of the market as it applies to a variety of industries (decorative objects, accessories, jewelry, beauty products, hospitality, automotive—fashion will be discussed as well but the discussion will be limited to the true luxury fashion houses)

b. Observation skills that will allow them to distinguish what constitutes luxury in a product (regardless of industry)

c. The necessary vocabulary to articulate the nuances that differentiate these products and the ability to do so with clarity and precision in terms of technique, design, and materials

d. The critical skills to identify potential new luxury products and how they relate to a variety of markets, including emerging markets.

Course administration

The course consists of case discussions and lectures. The cases and lectures will complement the text.

USE OF SMARTPHONES IN THE CLASSROOM IS FORBIDDEN. IF YOU HAVE A LEARNING DISABILITY AND MUST USE THE COMPUTER, PLEASE BRING ME A STATEMENT FROM THE MOSES CENTER.

Classroom Contributions

You need to be fully acquainted with the readings and cases for a given session. Positive participation includes attendance, active involvement in all in-class exercises and discussions, and maintenance of a classroom demeanor that encourages the participation of others.

You will be evaluated on the quantity as well as the quality of your contribution and
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insights. Quality comments possess one or more of the following attributes: (a) Contribute to moving the discussion forward; (b) Offer a different, unique and relevant perspective on the issue; (c) Build on other comments of others; and (d) Include some evidence or analysis of inherent tradeoffs, i.e., demonstrate reflective thinking.

Attendance Policy

Attendance at all sessions is expected. Absences will significantly impact the class participation grade.

Electronic Devices Policy

Cell phones and other electronic devices may not be used during class.

Honor Code

Students must adhere to the MBA Honor Code. All students are obligated to report to the instructor any suspected violations of the Code (see http://w4.stern.nyu.edu/scorp/committee.cfm?doc_id=4797).

Student With Disabilities

If you have a qualified disability and will require academic accommodation during this course, please contact the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD, 998-4980) and provide me with a letter from them verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. Keep in mind there is no exam for this class.

Course Grading

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-class quiz</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final project</td>
<td>40%</td>
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Course Materials

Texts:


There is also content on the Harvard Business Cases website. Find the link under “Resources” on NYU Classes.
https://cb.hbsp.harvard.edu/cbmp/access/35040949

Articles and book excerpts used for the course will be posted on NYU Classes under the tab “Bibliography.” Supplementary readings may be distributed in class or posted on NYU Classes.
Instructor

Thomaï Serdari, Ph.D. is a strategist in luxury marketing and branding. She helps clients launch, grow, and successfully manage luxury brands. She is an expert on luxury and actively studies, values, and reports on companies or funds that operate and invest within the luxury goods market.

Prof. Serdari has been teaching at New York University since 2004. She has developed a variety of courses at NYU, among which: “Cultures of Excess: Product and Fashion Design through Modernity” and “Entrepreneurship in the Business of Art.” She also developed the core courses for the Luxury Marketing specialization at the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, MBA level: “The Core of Luxury: Processes, Products, and Strategies through History,” “Luxury Branding: Brand Thinking and Experience,” and “Luxury Launch.”

Originally trained as an architect at the National Technical University of Athens, Prof. Serdari received her doctorate in Art History & Archaeology from the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University in 2005. She also holds an MBA from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business, New York University, with a specialization in corporate and quantitative finance (2009).

Heavily drawing on her interdisciplinary training, Prof. Serdari launched PIQluxury, a digital platform that provides marketing, consumer and creative intelligence to brand professionals to reinforce the creative direction of brands. She is the co-editor of the first academic interdisciplinary journal on Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption published by Taylor & Francis. Her chapter “Experiments in Suchness: Hiroshi Sugimoto Silk Shiki for Hermès,” appears in John Armitage & Joanne Roberts eds. Critical Luxury Studies: Art, Design, Media, Edinburgh University Press in 2016. She has contributed an essay entitled “STEIDL: Printer, Publisher, Alchemist: The Field of Luxury Production in Germany,” in the November 2015 issue of Luxury: History, Culture, Consumption and is regularly reviewing academic publications in the field of luxury business.

Prof. Serdari is one of the main contributors to the LVMH Fundamentals in Luxury Retail: A CPC/Parsons Collaboration, an education program designed to train and provide a wide range of retail skills to Chinese-Americans.
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**Detailed Course Outline**

*Mandatory readings in bold; Optional readings are marked as such; Questions are food for thought, no written submissions are expected.*

**Class #1**

Course introduction  
Definition of the following terms: brand, luxury, luxury brand  
Methodological approaches to understanding luxury  

Read:  
Come prepared to discuss your favorite luxury brands  
Final project explained and assigned  

Kapferer, Chapter 3  

OPTIONAL:  

Questions to prepare for discussion:  
1. Why do you think we are still paying attention to the 18th and 19th century debates (such as the ones outlined in Jennings’s article)?  
2. Which one of the “anti-laws” of marketing was novel to you? Or which do you find most objectionable? Why?

**Class #2**

Market segmentation beyond the socioeconomic  
Application: Luxury Fashion  

Read  

Kapferer, Chapter 6  

Harvard Business Case: “Moda Operandi: A New Style of Fashion Retail” 812040-PDF-ENG 8 p  

OPTIONAL:  

Berthon, P. et al. “Aesthetics and Ephemerality: Observing and Preserving the luxury brand” (Under: Bibliography)
Questions to prepare for discussion:

1. Fashion is one of the most familiar industries to both men and women. Having read the article on Prada’s strategic initiatives has your own perception of luxury fashion changed?
2. List a few of the fashion brands that at this point of our course you consider luxury and explain why.
3. Who are the key players in the industry and what roles do each play? How does each of these players create and claim value?
4. What are the challenges Moda Operandi faces from a marketing perspective? Justify your answer.

Class #3  
Craftsmanship: How are things made and why it matters

Read  
Kapferer, Chapters 8, 9 & 11
Harvard Business Case: “Louis Vuitton” W13009-PDF-ENG

OPTIONAL:

Class #4  
Binary Conventions in Luxury: East vs. West; Masculine vs. Feminine; Seriousness vs. Humor
What does Culture have to do with luxury and how you can use it to market luxury effectively

Final projects research

Class #5  
Communicating & Distributing Luxury
The beauty & fragrance industries

Read  
Kapferer, Chapters 7, 10
Harvard Business Case: “Estée Lauder” 801362-PDF-ENG 44 p
Class #6  Fine Jewelry & timepieces; Accessories; Art

SHORT IN-CLASS QUIZ

FINAL PROJECTS ARE DUE A WEEK AFTER CLASS ENDS