The Business of Wellness: Marketing & Consumption
Spring 2023 - Mondays/Wednesdays 1:45-3:15pm

Instructor: Prof. Annie Wilson, Ph.D.
Office hours: In person and via Zoom by appointment.

Course Description: Wellness relates to the active pursuit of activities, choices, and lifestyles that lead to a state of holistic health\(^1\). The global wellness industry represents a rapidly expanding, multi-trillion-dollar market. The purpose of this course is to provide a better understanding of the marketing of wellness brands, services, and products and the consumer behavior of wellness. Throughout the course, we will explore: 1) How organizations “sell wellness” via branding, communications, and product/service development; and 2) “Consuming wellness,” or the consumer psychology and behaviors of wellness. We will also consider significant ethical and moral issues in the wellness industry, and how consumers can be more discerning of wellness offerings. These topics will be explored through the specific lenses of marketing, consumer culture, and consumer psychology. By the end of the semester, students should have a better understanding of the wellness industry, including its various stakeholders, evolution, the business opportunities and challenges, and consumer behaviors.

Who Should Take this Course? This course is targeted toward students who are interested in making a positive difference in the world through the creation and marketing of wellness offerings and/or who are interested in better understanding the consumer behavior of wellness, including personal strategies consumers can deploy to improve their well-being. The topics we cover will cut across marketing strategies and tactics used by various business entities. If a student’s goal is to use wellness solely as a means to profit seeking, then this course is probably not a good fit for him/her/them. In fact, we will have critical discussions about if and when consumer wellness and profit-seeking objectives by businesses align. Moreover, there are many reading and writing assignments, so this course is targeted to those who like reading and writing too.

Of note, this course will not devote significant attention to healthcare or medical products/services. This course will also not devote significant attention to positive psychology or to understanding the psychological constructs around wellness—however enacting the skills, habits, behaviors, and experiences that contribute to happiness and well-being suggested by those literatures often require interacting with the marketplace and with brands and services in the industry of wellness. As such, aspects of this course could certainly complement and build on courses that focus on such topics. Indeed, throughout the semester, students will be asked to engage in personal reflections on the implications of class learnings for their own consumption behaviors and wellness pursuits. However, prior knowledge of those topics are not required for this course.

---

\(^1\) Global Wellness Institute, https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/
Course Structure and Materials
You will be assigned a variety of readings, podcasts, and video content to prepare for lectures – these should be completed by the day they are listed on the class schedule. They are provided to give you adequate background to engage meaningfully in the lecture content. This class is intended to be highly interactive and will rely heavily on student participation. The course will also be highly reflective as students will be encouraged to think deeply and write about their own wellness consumption throughout the semester.

Course Policies
No electronic devices are permitted in class. Late submissions of assignments will not be accepted. Class slides will be posted AFTER each lecture as will recordings of each lecture for those unable to attend a session. If you are not feeling physically well, do not attend class.

Assessments:
Class Participation (15%)
The value of this course depends heavily on the insights generated through class discussion. Constructive participation is based on analysis rather than opinion, and builds on the discussion flow. Quality is more important than quantity when it comes to class participation.

Discussion Exercises (10%)
You will be assigned five discussion exercises throughout the semester, the goal of which is for to reflect on various aspects of the course in terms of how they are applied in the marketplace and how they relate to your own consumption.

Case Response Papers (25%):
You will be assigned four short (~2 page) response papers based on the cases we will discuss in class (i.e., WW Re-Branding, Planet Fitness, Wellness Apps Cases, and Athletic Brewing Company). More details to follow.

Wellness Brand Case Study (25%)
In groups, this assignment involves creating a case study of a wellness brand of your choice – or of two rival wellness brands, as seen in the Headspace vs. Calm case, if you prefer. You will be tasked with writing a case study that includes context of the wellness market of your chosen brand, brand positioning and marketing strategies, a description of how the brand contributes to consumer wellness or not, an analysis of the brands current position, and any ethical concerns you have with the brand or its offerings. More details to follow.

Book Review/New Business Pitch (25%):
For this assignment, you will read one of the recommended books (your choice). You will then create a presentation detailing: 1) a short summary of the main takeaways of the book; 2) examples of brands that currently leverage learnings from the book; 3) An idea for a business, service, or app you could launch that would use the learnings from the book to help consumers improve their well-being. More details to follow.
# Course Schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/11</td>
<td>Introduction: What is Wellness?</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18</td>
<td>Why is There a Wellness Deficit?: Behavioral Biases</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Discussion Exercise 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/23</td>
<td>Why is There a Wellness Deficit?: Culture &amp; Consumerism</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Module I: Introduction & Behavioral Foundations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1/25</td>
<td>The Wellness Industry</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/30</td>
<td>Managing Wellness Brands</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>WW Case Write-Up Due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/1</td>
<td>The Fitness Industry</td>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>Beauty &amp; Body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/8</td>
<td>Tourism &amp; Hospitality</td>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/13</td>
<td>Games &amp; Gaming</td>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/15</td>
<td>Technology &amp; Mental Health</td>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/20</td>
<td>Launching a Wellness App</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>Wellness App Cases Writeup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22</td>
<td>Sustainability Marketing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/27</td>
<td>Stigmatized &amp; Taboo Products</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>Athletic Brewing Case Writeup</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Module II: Selling Wellness – Business Opportunities & Challenges*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>The Dark Side of the Wellness Industry: Products &amp; Services</td>
<td>L</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/13</td>
<td>The Dark Side of the Wellness Industry: Culture</td>
<td>M</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/15</td>
<td>Case Study Presentations</td>
<td></td>
<td>Wellness Brand Case Study Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3/20</td>
<td><em>Case Study Presentations</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/22</td>
<td>Minimalism &amp; Mindful Consumption</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/27</td>
<td>Negative Experiences</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29</td>
<td>Pleasures of the Heart &amp; Soul</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/3</td>
<td>Variety Seeking</td>
<td>Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5</td>
<td>Rituals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10</td>
<td>Spending Time</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12</td>
<td>Spending Money</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/17</td>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/19</td>
<td>Indulgence &amp; Self-Control</td>
<td>T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/24</td>
<td>Wellness at Work</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/26</td>
<td>New Business Presentations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Business Presentations &amp; Course Wrap</td>
<td>New Business Projects Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Module III: Consuming Wellness*
Readings:


   -Watch “Is the World Getting Better or Worse?” TEDTalk by Steven Pinker,

 -“These 10 Market Trends turned wellness into a $4.2 Trillion global industry” (2018), *Fast Company*, https://www.fastcompany.com/90247896/these-10-market-trends-turned-wellness-into-a-4-2-trillion-global-industry.

E. -Weight Watchers Case
   -“Burger King is the Latest Brand to use Depression as a Marketing Tool,” *Vox*, https://www.vox.com/the-goods/2019/5/2/18527110/burger-king-unhappy-meals-steakumms-sad-brand-twitter

F. -Planet Fitness Case


**Recommended:**
-AdWeek’s “Metaverse Marketing” podcast (Episodes 1-4)


J. -Headspace vs. Calm Case
-Carrot Rewards Case
-Hope and Grit Case

K. -Athletic Brewing Company Case


M. -“The False Promises of Wellness Culture,” JSTOR Daily, [https://daily.jstor.org/the-false-promises-of-wellness-culture/](https://daily.jstor.org/the-false-promises-of-wellness-culture/)


**Recommended:** *Minimalism: A Documentary about the Important Things*


-Visit Michael Norton’s TED Talk: http://www.ted.com/talks/michael_norton_how_to_buy_happiness
