



## The Marketing & Consumption of Wellness

**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<sup>1</sup>. The global wellness industry represents a rapidly expanding, multi-trillion-dollar market. The purpose of this opportunity week course is to provide an overview 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.

### Course Structure and Materials

You will be assigned a variety of readings, podcasts, and video content to prepare for sessions – 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.

### 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 (20%)

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.

#### Class Preparation Write-Ups (40%)

You will be assigned a write-up based on a case, reading, or brand to prepare in advance of each class session. Preparation assignments help you acquire a deeper understanding of course concepts and prepare for classroom discussion using the material assigned for the day. These preparation assignments will usually require you to respond to one of the questions listed on Canvas for each class session before 8:30 am. Similar to the business world, work must be

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<sup>1</sup> Global Wellness Institute, <https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/>

delivered on time. Therefore, you will only be eligible to receive credit for a preparation assignment if you submit it by the deadline (i.e., assignments submitted after the deadline will receive zero credit – no exceptions).

#### Team Project (40%)

You will work as a team to create a business pitch for a new wellness brand, service, or product. This project will involve a written proposal as well as a powerpoint of up to 10 slides. More details to follow.

### **Tentative Course Schedule**

#### **Session 1, March 6 (9-12pm ET) – Introduction to Wellness & the Why We Feel so Unwell**

- What is wellness; why is there a wellness deficit/ why is wellness so popular amongst consumers

#### **Session 2, March 7 (9-12pm ET) – The Wellness Industry & Fitness & Athleisure**

- Evolution, trends, and marketing in the fitness industry; creating engaging and compelling tourism and hospitality, spa, and wellness travel experiences

#### **Session 3, March 7 (9-12pm ET) – Games & Play and Stigmatized Markets**

- The psychology of gaming; and using gamification to improve well-being; marketing strategies and tactics in taboo and stigmatized wellness markets

#### **Session 4, March 8 (9-12pm ET) – Creating a Wellness Solution**

- Systems & design thinking for creating wellness solutions & considering stakeholder values and monetization strategies

#### **Session 5, March 9 (9-12pm ET) – Personal Consumption Strategies for Improving Wellness**

- Personal strategies to improve well-being - spending time and money; improving self-control and willpower; digital well-being

#### **Readings:**

##### **Session 1:**

- Wilson, T. D., & Gilbert, D. T. (2005). Affective forecasting: Knowing what to want. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 14(3). 131-134.
- Hsee, C. K., & Hastie, R. (2006). Decision and experience: why don't we choose what makes us happy?. *Trends in cognitive sciences*, 10(1), 31-37.
- Samuels, Alana (2018), “We are all Accumulating Mountains of Things,” *The Atlantic*, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/08/online-shopping-and-accumulation-of-junk/567985/>
- Cacioppo, J. T., & Cacioppo, S. (2018). Loneliness in the modern age: an evolutionary theory of loneliness (ETL). In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 58, pp. 127-197).

##### Recommended:

-Bellezza, S., Paharia N., & Keinan, A. (2017), "Conspicuous Consumption of Time: When Busyness and Lack of Leisure Time Become a Status Symbol," *JCR*.

**Session 2:**

–"Planet Fitness: No Judgements, No Lunks," Michael A. Roberto; HBS Case: #W23C67

**Session 3:**

–Granic et al., (2014), "The Benefits of Playing Video Games," *American Psychologist*,  
[https://www.avondwenm.nl/images/avonden/avond-2019/studiemateriaal/5\\_6\\_Benefits\\_of\\_playing\\_video\\_games.pdf](https://www.avondwenm.nl/images/avonden/avond-2019/studiemateriaal/5_6_Benefits_of_playing_video_games.pdf)

- "Athletic Brewing Company: Crafting the U.S. Non-Alcoholic Beer Category," Ayelet Israeli and Anne V. Wilson, HBS Case: #523021

**Session 4:**

- "CVS Health: Promoting Drug Adherence," Leslie John, John A. Quelch, and Robert S. Huckman, HBS Case: #515010.

- "The Carrot Rewards Wellness App: Innovating in the Behaviour Change Market," Shilaan Alzahawi and Pierre Chandon, HBS Case: #IN1514.

**Session 5:**

–Mogilner, Cassie, Zoe Chance, and Mike Norton (2012), "Giving Time Gives You Time," *Psychological Science*, 23:10, 1233-1238.

-Hamblin, J. (2014). Buy experiences, not things. *The Atlantic*, Oct 7, 2014.