DSM 599: ECOMMERCE MEDIA & MESSAGING
Section: 21898

Fall 2023
Time: Wednesdays, 6-8:50pm
Location: ANN L101

Instructor: Freddy Tran Nager
Office Hours: Wednesday afternoons by appointment
Email: fnager@usc.edu

I. Course Description

Ecommerce has evolved and expanded significantly since Amazon began selling books online nearly 30 years ago. Retail now exists within websites, mobile apps, social media, even videogames, and will appear in some form in connected television.

However, the ecommerce journey has not been smooth. The dotcom crash of 2000 proved that simply pushing products online didn't guarantee corporate survival. And recently, many high-flying ecommerce companies hit unexpected turbulence as post-pandemic consumers excitedly returned to brick-and-mortar stores.

This course explores the content and communication strategies that support ecommerce ventures, from the website copy that converts visitors into customers, to the subtle signals sent by various pricing models; from the controversial role of influencers in generating sales, to the very real reasons virtual retailers get physical.

The only prerequisite for this course is interest and experience in online shopping.

II. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will acquire expertise and experience in the following:

- Critically analyzing ecommerce platforms to ascertain their strengths and flaws.
- Crafting ecommerce content that serves multiple purposes, from branding to conversions.
- Evaluating the signals that different marketing mix choices (such as pricing models) send to consumers.
- Developing marketing communication plans to attract both buyers and sellers to multisided platforms.
- Researching the factors that shape the fate of new formats, like livestreaming.

III. Course Notes

This master-level course requires extensive reading (100+ pages per week), research, analysis, and planning. For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects 2 hours of out-of-class student work; consequently, prepare to invest 8 hours per week outside of class into course-related work.

In addition to lectures and in-class exercises, this course is web-enhanced, with mandatory discussions and lecture slides posted on Blackboard. Students will also use ChatGPT or other AI apps to complete projects.

USC computing support:
- USC Computing Center Laptop Loaner Program
- Zoom information for students
- Blackboard help for students
- Software available to USC Campus

IV. About Your Instructor

Freddy Tran Nager is the Associate Director of the M.S. in Digital Social Media program at Annenberg, where he has taught since 2012. Beyond the classroom, he has nearly 30 years of experience working in digital media. In 1994, he served as Editor of one of the world's first entertainment websites, *AMP: MCA Records Online*. He subsequently joined ad agency Saatchi & Saatchi as a senior creative for interactive media, winning awards for his work on Toyota digital media. Freddy currently runs the creative-strategy consultancy Atomic Tango LLC, which serves a diverse array of clients, including executives, entrepreneurs, and influencers. A second-generation Trojan, Freddy received his MBA from USC and his undergraduate degree from Harvard. He welcomes connections on LinkedIn at FreddyNager.com.

V. Required Media

- **Phil Barden & Rory Sutherland,** *Decoded, 2nd Edition*, **2022 Wiley** (free via the USC library): Although not focused on ecommerce, the book teaches a scientific approach to understanding consumer decisions — a valuable approach for ecommerce managers.

- **Baymard Institute** (https://baymard.com)**:** Extensive research on ecommerce user experience.

- **eCommerce Resources, International Trade Administration,** https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce: Official U.S. government website with references and resources for cross-border ecommerce.

- **Insider Intelligence Ecommerce & Retail** https://topics-na1.emarketer.com/industry/ecommerce-retail (free via the USC Library): A popular industry source, but question the answers, data, and research methods.
  - Retail Daily newsletter (subscribe via the above page)

In addition, articles from academic journals and news publications will be assigned and discussed on Blackboard. See the Lecture Schedule for details.

VI. Assignments

The following are brief summaries; complete instructions will be posted on Blackboard.

The primary assignment for this course is a team project that entails the planning (and optional launch) of a new ecommerce app, website, or social media profile. It consists of three required parts:

- **Assignment 1: Ecommerce Plan, Part 1, Competitor UX (10%):** Each team member will evaluate a different ecommerce competitor's strengths, weaknesses, and differentiation opportunities in terms of content and user experience.

- **Assignment 2: Ecommerce Plan, Part 2, Positioning Strategy (20%):** Your team will collectively analyze your target customers and how you want to be perceived by them relative to the competition.

- **Assignment 3: Ecommerce Plan, Part 3, Platform Guidelines (30%):** Your team will craft a detailed content-and-communication plan for your ecommerce platform, include product description guidelines, pricing strategies, and other policies.

- **Extra Credit: Ecommerce Launch (bonus of 0-10 points):** Your team will launch your ecommerce platform based on your plan. Your grade will not depend on the amount of sales, but on the quality of the execution that led to success or failure.

- **Quizzes (20% total):** 3 multiple-choice tests (10 points each — lowest score is dropped) will assess your individual understanding of the course lectures and other materials.

- **Literature Review (10%):** This entails two requirements on Blackboard.

o **Assigned Readings:** In 100-300 words, evaluate course readings by responding to discussion questions and classmates' posts.
o **Weekly News Evaluations:** You must stay atop news related to digital media. Every week, you will share on Blackboard a relevant recent article from *Baymard Institute, EMarketer Insider Intelligence*, *Wired*, the *L.A. Times*, *New York Times*, or *Wall Street Journal*, and express your opinion about it in approximately 100 words. You may be selected to present your evaluation during class.

- **Class Participation (10%):** Attendance is required, but attendance alone won't earn participation points. Whether online, in class, or with your team, you must converse, ask questions, and debate respectfully. Staying silent is unacceptable, especially in the company of guest speakers, since it conveys disengagement. On a related note, unauthorized use of phones and computers in class will result in a loss of 1 participation point per incident. In addition, arriving late or leaving early without instructor permission will also result in a 1 participation point deduction. Preparation is essential: review past lectures, complete assigned readings, research additional materials, and apply theories to personal experiences. Here is how your class participation is evaluated:
  o Is it relevant to the discussion and respectful of others?
  o Does it address ideas offered by the readings, lectures, guests, or classmates?
  o Does it increase everyone's understanding or merely repeat facts?
  o Does it support views with data, third-party theories, and research?
  o Does it test new ideas and challenge assumptions, or just "play it safe"?

The other half of your participation grade will be based on your contributions to your team assignment. At the end of the semester, you will confidentially rate each of your peers on a scale of 1-5 based on the value of their feedback throughout the term. Students will receive an average of their ratings as part of their final grade.

VII. Grading

a. Breakdown

Assignment	Due	% of Grade
Ecommerce Plan, Part 1: Competitor UX	9/15	10
Ecommerce Plan, Part 2: Positioning Strategy	10/20	20
Ecommerce Plan, Part 3: Platform Guidelines	12/6	30
3 Quizzes (lowest score dropped)	9/20, 10/18, 11/15	20
Literature Review	all semester (13 total)	10
Class Participation	(all semester)	10
TOTAL		**100%**

Scale

94% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 93%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

Standards

Grade	Description
A	Excellent: A's and A-minuses must be earned by "going the extra mile" to produce professional-caliber work that could be presented to a client, supervisor, or investor. A-level work features high production quality with no mistakes, draws on in-depth research of authoritative sources, reflects comprehensive understanding of course materials, and demonstrates superlative creativity, critical thinking, and communication skills. Recommendations will be provided on request **only** to students who earn a solid A in the course.
B	Good: B's are earned for graduate-school caliber work featuring in-depth research of authoritative sources, critical thinking, and solid if not thorough understanding of course materials, with only minor substantive shortcomings. The ideas and production quality need to be stronger to succeed in a professional context.
C	Fair: C's are earned for undergraduate-caliber work, reflecting insufficient critical thinking, only basic understanding, superficial research, and/or flawed production quality. Note that for graduate students, a C- is equal to failing.
D	Marginal: D's are earned for amateurish work featuring insufficient research, many errors, incomplete sections, and/or superficial analysis. The work demonstrates only rudimentary understanding.
F	Failing: F's are earned for work that's incomplete, not researched, carelessly executed, and/or plagiarized. Note that plagiarism may also be subject to disciplinary measures. The work demonstrates little to no understanding. Three or more unexcused absences will also result in an F.

Timeframe and Disputes

Since this is a communication-management course, deadlines are critical. Without an exceptional circumstance and the instructor's permission, late assignments will penalized one grade level (e.g., A to B) per day of lateness. As in the working world, where lateness can result in lost opportunities or even lawsuits, missing a deadline by even one minute will result in a penalty.

Assignment Grading Rubric

Assignments will be graded on the following criteria without a fixed percentage, since unacceptable quality in any one area (writing, research, etc.) can undermine an entire project. Conversely, exceptional quality in one area may contribute to an overall positive evaluation.

- **Critical Thinking:** In communication there are few right answers: so-called "best practices" for one entity might fail for another — or even for the same entity at another time. Consequently, you should not just answer the questions, you should also question the answers, including methods and data. (Academic journal articles are not immune from critical analysis.) Assignments are not just reports: they must describe "why" and "how," not just "what," and will be evaluated on the quality of the reasoning.

- **Creativity:** Your work should feature original ideas, not just "best practices," and should NEVER consist of copied or AI-generated work (see "Academic Integrity" in this syllabus). Creativity is expected for both content ideas and business strategies. You may certainly be "inspired" by others, as long as you properly credit the sources, but most of the thinking and execution should be originally yours, and extra points will be awarded to work that is innovative and imaginative. The goal is to differentiate and distinguish yourself — after all, "outstanding" literally means "to stand out."

- **Production Quality:** Your work should feature professional production values in terms of writing, design, and (as applicable) video and audio content. Treat your work as a submission to a media company, client, supervisor, or investor. Eliminate all errors by proofreading meticulously, using Microsoft editing tools, AI

apps, and/or Grammarly.com (strongly recommended). For help with fluency or simply polishing your writing, contact Annenberg's Graduate Writing Coach (http://cmgtwriting.uscannenberg.org/). For design tips, read *Presentation Zen* (available via USC library).

- **Research Quantity and Quality:** Support your work with research from multiple authoritative sources, including academic journals, major news publications, and credible experts — no guessing, generalizations, or stereotypes (such as "Gen Z").
    o Start with the USC online library and our librarians, who have prepared Research Guidelines for CMGT (https://libguides.usc.edu/cmgt) and DSM (https://libguides.usc.edu/digitalsocialmedia), as well as all other departments throughout the university (https://libguides.usc.edu).
    o Search Google Scholar (https://scholar.google.com/) before searching regular Google.
    o Never cite Wikipedia; rather, refer to the sources listed in the Wikipedia article.
    o Do not trust sources cited by AI tools, such as ChatGPT. Verify before quoting or citing.
    o Avoid company blogs (unless they are companies you are researching) and superficial news sites like the 3F's (*Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *Fast Company* are not authoritative).
    o Go beyond third-party sources and conduct direct research, such as focus groups, surveys, and interviews, particularly of subject-matter experts like professionals and professors.
    o Within the body of papers, include reference notes, either parenthetical, such as (Lee 2017), or in the form of footnotes or endnotes.
    o Bibliography entries must include COMPLETE source information, not just a URL. You may use any format that includes ALL the following: FULL FIRST NAMES AND LAST NAMES of authors (we respect creators in this course, so a first-name initial alone is not enough — a critical flaw with APA style), article/chapter titles, the name of the publication, dates of publication, original URLs (not USC library), and the dates a particular website was accessed.

VIII. Policies and Procedures

- **Attendance:** Participation from each student is critical to the success of this course; therefore, class attendance is mandatory. You must attend all classes, arrive on time, and stay for the entire session. Although no points are awarded for attendance, an unexcused absence will result in the loss of 5 grade points (half a grade); 3 or more unexcused absences will result in an F for the course. In addition, any missed in-class assignments (such as quizzes and presentations) cannot be made up without a valid excuse. If you need to miss a class for a valid reason, such as religious observances or medical procedures, you must attain approval from the instructor in advance (except, of course, in emergencies). Student athletes should provide approved Travel Request Letters. For any excused absences, you will need to obtain lecture notes from classmates and Blackboard.

- **Illness:** If you are feeling ill, particularly with COVID symptoms, stay home to protect the health of your classmates, your instructors, and yourself. If you show up to class with an illness, you will be asked to leave and will be recorded as absent.

- **Electronics:** You must have a computer for accessing course materials from home; *however, phones, tablets, and computers may NOT be used during class meetings without permission of the instructor*, and should be completely hidden away before class begins. Any unauthorized use of electronics will result in the loss of 1 participation point, and you might be asked to leave the session.

- **Artificial Intelligence Apps:** You are expected to use AI tools, such as ChatGPT, in this class; in fact, some assignments might require it. Here are the guidelines, with assignments containing more details:
    o AI is a useful tool for helping start an assignment — even help overcome writer's block — but the final submission must reflect your ideas and revisions. Treat AI as a personal intern: someone who can help you, but who has shortcomings and may be prone to mistakes.
    o Don't trust what AI says. Not only is ChatGPT's database limited to the years 2021 and earlier, it draws its answers from fiction. nonfiction, and misinformation. It might even fabricate sources. Assume the answers it provides are wrong, and doublecheck them. (Consider using Google Bard or Bing AI as supplemental tools.) You will be held responsible for any errors.
    o Provide detailed prompts to get the best results. You might have to try multiple variations.
    o Your work will become part of the AI's database, so do not include any sensitive information.

- o You must acknowledge using any AI tools, just as you would any other reference, in your assignments. Include a paragraph explaining what you used AI for and how you used it, including the specific prompts.

- **Respect:** Treat classmates, the instructor, and speakers with courtesy. You may certainly question and criticize ideas — that is encouraged in the learning environment — but never criticize the person. We are a community, so respect the opinions of others; instead of saying that you "disagree" or even "respectfully disagree," offer a "different perspective."

- **Appointments:** If you have questions or concerns, whether academic, career, or personal, contact the instructor to arrange a meeting (please see email addresses on the first page of this syllabus). In emergencies, see the support systems below.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the USC Student Handbook. All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see the student handbook or the Office of Academic Integrity's website, and university policies on Research and Scholarship Misconduct.

Annenberg Statement

The School of Communication maintains a commitment to the highest standards of ethical conduct and academic excellence. Any student found responsible for plagiarism, fabrication, cheating on examinations, or purchasing papers or other assignments will be reported to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs and Community Standards and may be dismissed from the School of Communication. There are no exceptions to the school's policy.

In addition, it is assumed that the work you submit for this course is work you have produced entirely by yourself and has not been previously produced by you for submission in another course or Learning Lab, without approval of the instructor.

Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. (Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook, page 13).

Students and Disability Accommodations:

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at osas.usc.edu. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at osasfrontdesk@usc.edu.

Support Systems:

Counseling and Mental Health - *(213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call*
Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline - *988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call*
The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - *(213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call*
Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX (EEO-TIX) - *(213) 740-5086*
Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - *(213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298*
Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) - *(213) 740-0776*
OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

USC Campus Support and Intervention - *(213) 740-0411*

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion - (213) 740-2101
Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

USC Emergency - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call
Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

USC Department of Public Safety - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call
Non-emergency assistance or information.

Office of the Ombuds - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)
A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice - (323) 442-2850 or otfp@med.usc.edu
Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

Annenberg Student Success Fund
https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund
https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/annenberg-scholarships-and-awards
Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

USC American Language Institute
ali.usc.edu
English language instruction, assessment, and resources to support the academic and professional success of non-native speakers of English pursuing degrees at USC.

Annenberg Graduate Writing Support
sites.usc.edu/graduate-writing-coach/
In addition to being the place to make one-on-one appointments with the writing coach, this website will host resources, videos, and news about upcoming programs.

Annenberg Digital Lounge
annenbergdl.org
Free lessons and certifications on a range of digital media.

IX. Course Schedule

This schedule will likely change depending on class progress, world events, and guest speaker availability. For final requirements, please refer to the lecture slides, which will be posted to Blackboard the night before each class. Assigned readings should be completed prior to the NEXT class.

Class 1, August 23: Introducing Ecommerce
- Ecommerce Forensics: livestreaming and the PEST analysis
- Course intro: requirements and expectations (including writing, research, and critical thinking)
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - Jordyn Homan & Kalley Huang, "The Companies Trying To Make Live Shopping A Thing In The U.S.," *New York Times*, 10 May 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/10/business/live-shopping-us.html
  - Vivian Wang, "The Shining Promise and Dashed Dreams of China's Live Shopping Craze," New York Times, 28 April 2023, https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/28/business/china-livestreaming-ecommerce.html
  - Patrick Coffee, "Retailers, Brands And Tech Platforms Bet Big On Live-Streamed Shopping In The U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, 18 October 2022, https://www.wsj.com/articles/live-stream-shopping-brands-retailers-11666037451
  - Tracy Wen Liu, "TikTok And Amazon Bet On China's Ecommerce Model. It's A Dud," Wired, 28 March 2023, https://www.wired.com/story/tiktok-amazon-china-livestream-ecommerce/
- **Assignment due before next class: Self-Intro + Syllabus Acknowledgment**

Class 2, August 30: Identifying Opportunities + Revenue Models
- What is Amazon really selling? When products are just an excuse — alternative revenue models
  - retail media, data aggregation, memberships
- Riches in niches? The Long Tail
- DTC (direct to consumer) — facts and fallacies
- Who needs a product? dropshipping, affiliate marketing, and promoting other sellers
- Ecommerce for SMEs
- Class teams and teamwork
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - "The State Of Ecommerce 2023," Storyblok
  - Chris Anderson, "The Long Tail," *Wired*, 1 October 2004, https://www.wired.com/2004/10/tail/

Class 3, September 6: Analyzing Stakeholders
- Behavioral Targeting: sell to needs, not stereotypes
- Customer Relevance Scores + Personas
- Competitor Analysis
- Community: regulators, media, partners
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
- **Assignment due Friday, September 15: Competitor User Experience**

Class 4, September 13: Defining Success
- Losing money on every sale: growth vs profitability, and how investor priorities drive strategies
- War of attrition? Competing for market share
- Goals and KPI's, EPOS, and First-Party Data
- Many unhappy returns
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - Weekly Article Evaluation
  - Suzanne Kapner, "Retailers Clamp Down On Returns," *Wall Street Journal*, 23 May 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/online-retailers-tighten-return-policies-to-boost-profits-9bf6ccc2

- o Vahini Vara, "Fast, Cheap, and Out of Control: Inside Shein's Sudden Rise," *Wired*, 4 May 2022, https://www.wired.com/story/fast-cheap-out-of-control-inside-rise-of-shein/
- **Assignment: Quiz next week**

Class 5, September 20: Selecting & Managing Platforms
- Quiz 1
- Pros and cons of websites vs apps vs social commerce
- Virtual meets real: the rise of the hybrid model
- Readings (complete before next class):
    - o Weekly Article Evaluation
    - o "Here's What Bothers Consumers Most When Shopping Online," *Marketing Charts*, 9 June 2023, https://www.marketingcharts.com/industries/retail-and-e-commerce-229658
    - o Natalie Whittle, "Beyond Amazon — Curated Marketplaces Get Sophisticated," *Financial Times*, 20 April 2023, https://www.ft.com/content/c89ad5e5-096f-4030-9362-d8207f0abc94
    - o "How Is The Online Shopping Experience Influencing In-Store Shopping?," *Nielsen IQ*, 18 July 2023, https://nielseniq.com/global/en/insights/analysis/2023/how-is-the-online-shopping-experience-influencing-in-store-shopping/

Class 6, September 27: Positioning and $ending $ignals
- Building Trust: reviews, referrals, recommendations, and the misused "About Us" section
- Who are the real influencers here? reviews, referrals, recommendations
- What do you mean by "luxury"? Positioning the platform
- The Devil is in the Discounts: the race to the bottom
    - o what low pricing says about you
- Readings (complete before next class):
    - o Weekly Article Evaluation
    - o Decoded, Foreword + Preface + Chapter 1
    - o Kate King, "Online-Only Startups Adopt a Bold New Strategy: Opening Actual Shops," *New York Time*s, 13 May 2023, https://www.wsj.com/articles/warby-parker-allbirds-everlane-parachute-collars-co-stores-e4b94623
    - o Zachary Karabell, "Best Buy Bucks the Trend That's Crushing Other Retailers," *Wired*, https://www.wired.com/story/best-buy-bucks-the-trend-thats-crushing-other-retailers/
- **Assignment due Friday, October 20: Positioning Strategy**

Class 7, October 4: Crafting Content Strategy, Part 1 — Closing The Loop
- Customer Lifecycle + Closed-Loop Measuring:
prospects → visitors → customers → loyalists → advocates
(reach, acquisition, conversion, retention, loyalty)
- Readings (complete before next class):
    - o Weekly Article Evaluation
    - o Decoded, Chapter 2

Class 8, October 11: Crafting Content Strategy, Part 2 — Gamification + Dark Patterns
- Site elements: words and rich media
- Creating urgency
- Reducing friction and shopping cart abandonment
- Rating systems
- Readings (complete before next class):
    - o Weekly Article Evaluation
    - o Decoded, Chapter 3
    - o Avinash Kaushik, "Six Nudges: Creating A Sense Of Urgency For Higher Conversion Rates!" *Occam's Razor*, 4 June 2018, https://www.kaushik.net/avinash/nudges-creating-urgency-higher-conversions-revenue/
    - o "Types Of Dark Pattern," Dark Patterns, https://darkpatterns.org
    - o Dan Ariely, "Gamed: How Companies Get You to Share More and Spend More," Wired, 20 June 2011, https://www.wired.com/2011/06/ff-gamed/

- o Sam Kemmis, "How Airlines Trick You Into Paying More," Los Angeles Times, 22 July 2023, https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2023-07-22/how-airlines-trick-you-into-paying-more
  - o Louise Matsakis, "The Subtle Tricks Shopping Sites Use to Make You Spend More," *Wired*, 6 August 2020, https://www.wired.com/story/amazon-online-retail-dark-patterns/
- **Assignment: Quiz next week**

Class 9, October 18: Promoting The Platform
- Quiz 2
- ROSI (Research Online, Shop In-store) or ROPO (Research Online, Purchase Offline)
- Credit where credit isn't due: the problem with attribution
- Etail and email
- Retargeting: are the annoyance + alienation worth it?
- True influencers
- Lookalikes and advertising
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation
  - o Decoded, Chapter 4
  - o Alexanda Upton & Justin O'Brien, "Glossier: From Beauty Blog to Billion-Dollar Brand Community," Sage Knowledge, 4 January 2021, https://sk.sagepub.com/cases/glossier-from-beauty-blog-to-billion-dollar-brand-community

Class 10, October 25: Serving Multiple Sides
- Hosting sellers and buyers, and how to get enough of each
- B2B: the under-tapped opportunity
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation
  - o Decoded, Chapter 5
- **Assignment due Wednesday, December 6: Final Project Due**
- **Optional Assignment due Wednesday, December 6: Launch Ecommerce Platform**

Class 11, November 1: Going Global
- Internationalization vs Localization
- Risk of the grey market
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation
  - o Decoded, Chapter 6
  - o International Trade Association Ecommerce Resources https://www.trade.gov/ecommerce

Class 12, November 8: Embracing Diversity
- eDEIA: Opportunities in creating opportunities
- The Fortune At The Bottom Of The Pyramid
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation
  - o Decoded, Chapter 7 + Closing Remarks
- **Assignment: Quiz next week**

Class 13, November 15: The Future Of Ecommerce
- Quiz 3
- Fads, trends, traditions, and empty promises
- Metawhat and AI
- Readings (complete before next class):
  - o Weekly Article Evaluation
  - o NielsenIQ Brandbank, "The Future Of Retail: Adapting To Trends To Grow Sales," 2022
  - o Steven Levy, "Shopify Goes Soul Searching," *Wired*, 24 June 2022, https://www.wired.com/story/plaintext-shopify-soul-searching/
- **Assignment November 29: optional Zoom presentations**

Thanksgiving — No Class Meeting November 22

Class 14, November 29: Zoom Presentations

EXAM WEEK, December 6: Final Projects Due
- Final project due on Blackboard
- Optional: launch your ecommerce platform