

Commerce 4MA3 Advertising & Integrated Marketing Communications Fall 2025 Course Outline

Marketing
DeGroote School of Business
McMaster University

INSTRUCTOR AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Joel Leavitt
Instructor

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To be Confirmed
TA

Office Hours: after class

Office Hours: by appointment

COURSE ELEMENTS

Credit Value: 3	Leadership: Yes	IT skills: Yes	Global view: Yes
A2L: Yes	Ethics: Yes	Numeracy: Yes	Written skills: Yes
Participation: Yes	Innovation: Yes	Group work: Yes	Oral skills: Yes
Evidence-based: Yes	Experiential: No	Final Exam: No	Guest speaker(s): Yes

COURSE INFORMATION

Lectures: Wednesdays 8:30-11:20 (3hr x1/wk)

Course Delivery Mode: In-person

This course explores the strategic role of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) in building and growing brands in our evolving marketplace. Students will learn to transform marketing objectives into persuasive campaigns by developing brand positioning, crafting single-minded creative briefs, and designing integrated plans that span diverse consumer touchpoints (i.e. digital, social, broadcast, print and emerging platforms).

Through real-world cases and team projects, students will practice uncovering consumer insights, identifying growth opportunities, and exploring creative solutions with confidence. By the end of the

course, they will have created a full IMC campaign, from brand strategy and positioning to a unifying big idea, media plan and creative executions. In the process, students will gain both the strategic discipline and creative confidence required to succeed in marketing today.

IMPORTANT LINKS

- [Mosaic](#)
- [Avenue to Learn](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services - Accommodations](#)
- [McMaster University Library](#)

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Explain the key terms, definitions, and concepts of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)
- Identify and articulate a brand's strategic growth opportunities
- Demonstrate a critical understanding of the core components for building a brand's identity, including positioning and brand keys
- Develop effective creative and media briefs as a foundation for delivering marketing plans
- Evaluate advertising across media channels using tools to assess creative effectiveness and provide constructive feedback
- Design media plans by selecting appropriate media mixes to achieve IMC campaign objectives, and define measurable OKRs (Objectives and Key Results) and KPIs (Key Performance Indicators).
- Understand the roles of marketing teams and advertising agencies in campaign development, and discuss approaches for building effective working relationships
- Analyze how technology, shifting consumer behaviour, and the evolving retail landscape are reshaping the marketing and advertising industry

COURSE LEARNING GOALS

To reach these learning outcomes, students will learn how to:

- Translate marketing objectives into advertising objectives and define KPI's for measurement
- Research, analyze, and segment consumers in a marketplace
- Apply creative strategies to develop persuasive communications
- Build and leverage brand identity attributes and assets
- Select and justify appropriate media channels to deliver advertising messages to specific audiences

- Apply positioning strategies to clearly differentiate a brand from its competitors
- Pitch ideas with clarity, confidence and persuasive impact
- Evaluate creative ideas for effectiveness and impact
- Use critical thinking to challenge assumptions and approach problems from a new perspective

REQUIRED MATERIALS AND TEXTS

These items are an integral part of the lesson plan for the course, and not having these materials could have a negative impact on a student's learning outcomes for the course.

Required:

Beloved Brands: The playbook for how to build a brand your consumers will love

Author: Graham Robertson (2022)

Amazon.ca (\$49.99 – Paperback)

Second-hand options are allowed

Optional:

Under the Influence with Terry O'Reilly – a CBC podcast:

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/undertheinfluence>

The Smart Advertising Book: How to deliver advertising that grows your brand

Author: Dan White (2024)

Amazon.ca (\$17.95 – Paperback)

CLASS FORMAT

This is an in-person 3-hour course. During class time, students will participate in group discussions and applied exercises focusing on critical thinking and the application of course material.

Students must prepare for class by reviewing posted content in Avenue, listening to podcasts, or reviewing other assigned digital content.

COURSE EVALUATION

	GRADE ITEM	WEIGHT	DESCRIPTION
INDIVIDUAL	Class Engagement	20%	Preparation, active participation in discussions and group activities, peer feedback, and demonstrated leadership
	Critical Reflection Journal	20%	Weekly reflections connecting course concepts to real-world marketing, demonstrating learning and critical thinking
	Brand Positioning Assignment	10%	Develop a positioning statement for a chosen brand using class frameworks
GROUP	Group IMC Presentation (#1)	20%	Teams of 4-5 analyze a case to deliver a Strategic Brand Assessment, including target segmentation, key insights, growth opportunities and a creative brief
	Group IMC Presentation (#2)	30%	Teams build a full Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) plan, including a Big Idea, campaign objectives, sample creative, and channel/media strategy with budget allocation

All work is evaluated individually except where group work is expected. In these cases, group members will share the same grade. If a team requests a peer evaluation, each group member will be asked to rate their peers after all components have been submitted.

It is essential to ensure all group members are contributing fully and appropriately to all parts of the assignment. Your instructor reserves the right to modify individual grades in group projects based on feedback provided by all parties.

COURSE DELIVERABLES

Individual Components – 50% of final grade

Class Engagement – 20%

Active participation is essential to creating a strong learning environment. Students are evaluated on the quality of their contributions to class discussion, not just attendance. Assigned material, including podcasts and articles should be reviewed in advance. Students may be asked to deliver short (1-minute) summaries of materials as part of their class participation grade. Group study is welcome.

Critical Reflection Journal – 20%

Students will submit a weekly journal reflecting on their learning journey, connecting course concepts to real-world examples. Feedback will be provided to encourage deeper thinking and improve the journal quality over time.

Brand Positioning Assignment – 10%

Each student will select a brand and develop a positioning statement using the tools discussed in class (i.e. product ladder, functional and emotional benefits, competitive differentiation).

Group Components – 50% of final grade

Strategic Brand Assessment – 20%

Working in teams, students will analyze a provided case study to identify brand challenges, key issues and opportunities, target consumers, and key insights. Findings will be synthesized into a strategic brand recommendation, delivered in power point format.

The assessment should include:

- Consumer and market research, consumer and target market segmentation, and the articulation of key insights
- Critical analysis of brand growth opportunities, inclusive of strategic statements
- Creative brief

Integrated Marketing Communications Plan – 30%

Building on the Strategic Brand Assessment, teams will deliver a comprehensive IMC plan.

The project must include:

- Clear campaign objectives (OKRs & KPIs)
- A unifying big idea
- An integrated communications plan that details channel strategy, creative tactics, and budget allocation.

Teams will present their plans in class, with an emphasis on persuasive pitching and storytelling. After the presentations, there will be an opportunity for peer voting & feedback where students will 'invest' in the campaigns they would back if they were a CMO.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS

Late assignments are not accepted in this course.

Students seeking an extension should contact their Instructor/TA before the due date to discuss available accommodation.

All assignments must be submitted electronically via the Assignment Dropbox in Avenue by the due date.

In-class work cannot be submitted after the class is over. Ensure you upload/hand-in any papers, worksheets, and so on before leaving the classroom.

COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

Students who wish to correspond with instructors or TAs directly via email must send messages that originate from their official McMaster University email account. This protects the confidentiality and sensitivity of information as well as confirms the identity of the student.

All students must receive feedback regarding their progress prior to the final date by which a student may cancel the course without failure by default.

- ☐ *For Level 1 and Level 2 courses, this feedback must equal a minimum of 20% of the final grade.*
- ☐ *For Level 3 courses and above, this feedback must equal a minimum of 10% of the final grade.*

Instructors may solicit feedback via an informal course review with students by Week #4 to allow time for modifications in curriculum delivery.

Students who have concerns about the course content, evaluation methods, or delivery should first reach out to the course instructor. If your concern remains unresolved after speaking with the instructor, you may then reach out to the relevant Area Chair for further consideration.

REQUESTING RELIEF FOR MISSED ACADEMIC WORK

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar [“Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”](#) and the link below*;

<http://ug.degroote.mcmaster.ca/forms-and-resources/missed-course-work-policy/>

* Non-Commerce students must follow the Missed Course Work protocols outlined by their home faculty and Program Office.

COURSE MODIFICATION

From time to time there may be a need to remove/add topics or to change the schedule or the delivery format. If these are necessary, you will be given as much advance notice as possible.

GENERATIVE AI

Students may use generative AI in this course in accordance with the guidelines outlined for each assessment, and so long as the use of generative AI is referenced and cited following citation instructions given in the syllabus. Use of generative AI outside assessment guidelines or without citation will constitute academic dishonesty. It is the student's responsibility to be clear on the limitations for use for each assessment and to be clear on the expectations for citation and reference and to do so appropriately.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

AUTHENTICITY/PLAGIARISM DETECTION

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. Avenue to Learn, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.

COURSES WITH AN ON-LINE ELEMENT

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn, LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

ONLINE PROCTORING

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](#) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](#) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities](#) policy.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION FOR RELIGIOUS, INDIGENOUS OR SPIRITUAL OBSERVANCES (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO](#) policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office **normally within 10 working days** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar’s Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

COPYRIGHT AND RECORDING

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

EXTREME CIRCUMSTANCES

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, Avenue to Learn and/or McMaster email.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COURSE POLICIES

Your enrolment in Commerce 4MA3 will be considered to be an implicit acknowledgement of the course policies outlined above, or of any other that may be announced during lecture and/or on A2L. **It is your responsibility to read this course outline, to familiarize yourself with the course policies and to act accordingly.**

Lack of awareness of the course policies **cannot be invoked** at any point during this course for failure to meet them. It is your responsibility to ask for clarification on any policies that you do not understand.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Commerce 4MA3 Advertising & Integrated Marketing Communications Fall 2025 Course Schedule

WEEK	DATE	TOPICS	ASSESSMENT DUE DATES
1	Wed. Sept. 3	Course & Assignment Details Intro to IMC, Ethics in Advertising	Critical reflections are due @ 11:59 PM on the NIGHT BEFORE CLASS
2	Wed. Sept. 10	Critical Brand Assessment	Critical Reflection #1
3	Wed. Sept. 17	Consumers & Target Markets	Critical Reflection #2
4	Wed. Sept. 24	Brand Identity & Positioning	Critical Reflection #3
5	Wed. Oct. 1	Big Ideas	Critical Reflection #4
6	Wed. Oct. 8	No class	Critical Reflection #5 Strategic Brand Assessment Due Friday @ 9am
7	Wed. Oct. 15	Mid-term Recess	
8	Wed. Oct. 22	Creative Strategy	Critical Reflection #6
9	Wed. Oct. 29	Communications Strategy & Media Planning	Critical Reflection #7 Brand Positioning Assignment Due Friday @ 9am
10	Wed. Nov. 5	Digital Media	Critical Reflection #8
11	Wed. Nov. 12	Traditional Media, Direct Marketing, Sales Promotions, Experiential Marketing & PR	Critical Reflection #9
12	Wed. Nov. 19	The future of advertising	IMC Presentation Due Friday @ 9am
13	Wed. Nov. 26	Presentations	
14	Wed. Dec. 3	Presentations	IMC Team Peer Evaluation Due End of Class
15	Wed. Dec 10	No Class - No Exam	