

Luxury Business New York City

Location: New York City, USA

Duration: 4 Weeks

Level: Undergraduate

U.S. Semester Credits: 4.00

Academic Tracks: Business, Management, and Entrepreneurship; Marketing and Communications; Art History; Museum and Curatorial Studies; Fashion Design and Marketing; Interior Design and Architecture; Cultural and Media Studies

Prerequisites: None – open to all majors, no technical background required

Hours: Mondays – Thursdays, 10am - 4pm

Course Overview

Set in one of the world's luxury capitals, this immersive, four-week course explores the dynamic intersections of luxury goods, real estate, fashion, and branding. Students will explore historic and contemporary frameworks of how 'luxury' is defined, marketed and consumed, and what the future holds for the luxury business sector. Through hands-on learning and project-based work, students will trace how 'luxury' has historically been defined and how it is being redefined today. With a forward-looking lens, this course considers the rise of digital luxury, the increasing importance of sustainability, and responsible business frameworks for luxury brands.

Students will learn from behind-the-scenes access to luxury brands, marketing executives, real estate strategists, and branding experts as they explore the New York City luxury market. From Chanel to Sotheby's, students will develop strong understandings of the living laboratory of luxury in New York City and be well-prepared to make their mark on its future. Lastly, students will gain firsthand career exposure through direct interaction with industry professionals, behind-the-scenes site visits, and collaborative projects, building meaningful connections and practical insights into career pathways within New York City's luxury sector.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

1. Define and analyze 'luxury' across cultural, historical, and economic frameworks, with a particular focus on New York City.
2. Explain the structure and drivers of the contemporary luxury economy, including global markets and consumer behavior.
3. Evaluate brand architecture, experience design, and storytelling used by leading luxury brands.
4. Identify emerging trends in luxury, including sustainability, technological innovation, and shifting consumer values.

5. Demonstrate confidence in applying knowledge of branding and pricing issues in the marketing of luxury goods and products.

Assessments

Assessments are completed throughout the course and encourage teamwork, industry engagement, and collaboration.

1. Participation & Professional Conduct (20%)
2. Mood Board: What is Luxury Today? (10%)
3. Luxury Market Analysis (20%)
4. Luxury Brand Challenge (40%)
5. Critical Reflection (10%)

Week 1: Foundations of Luxury

Focus: Week 1 explores the origins, aesthetics, and cultures of luxury in NYC. Students examine how luxury has been defined across time, cultures, and economic systems, from heritage craftsmanship and exclusivity to modern expressions of status and aspiration. Using New York City as a case study, students explore the evolution of luxury in fashion, real estate, art, and consumer culture. Key discussions focus on symbolism, scarcity, craftsmanship, and cultural capital, setting a shared vocabulary and framework for analyzing luxury throughout the course.

Sample seminars:

- Objects of Desire: Iconic Luxury
- What Is Luxury? From Craftsmanship to Cultural Capital

Sample guest lectures and co-curricular activities:

- Fifth Avenue behind-the-scenes tour
- Sotheby's New York City

Week 2: The Luxury Economy

Focus: Building on foundational concepts, Week 2 explores the economic structures that drive the global luxury industry in New York City. Students analyze how luxury markets function, including pricing strategies, global supply chains, consumer segmentation, and the influence of emerging markets. Special attention is given to New York City's and the Hamptons luxury real estate, retail districts, and investment landscape. Through case studies and industry insights, students investigate how wealth, globalization, and consumer behavior shape the modern luxury economy.

Sample seminars:

- Abundant Rarity: Luxury's Marketing Secret
- Consumer Typologies: From Old Money to the New Rich
- Economics of Exclusivity, Pricing, and Value Retention

Sample guest lectures and co-curricular activities:

- Hospitality as Performance: Fine Dining Experience
- Luxury real estate markets: Hamptons case study
- Sotheby's Auction House: Private Sales

Week 3: Brand Architecture and Experience

Focus: Explore how luxury brands craft identity, storytelling, and experience. Week 3 centers on how luxury brands create meaning, desire, and loyalty through brand architecture, storytelling, and immersive experiences. Using case studies of luxury brands such as Oscar de la Renta and Louis Vuitton, students examine how leading luxury brands manage portfolios, protect brand equity, and design high-touch consumer journeys across physical and digital environments. Site visits and guest speakers highlight how flagship stores, private client experiences, and cultural collaborations reinforce brand narratives and exclusivity.

Sample seminars:

- Brand architecture: House of Brands vs. Branded House
- Strategic Storytelling: A Chanel Case Study
- Celebrity and Influencer Strategy and Cultural Capital
- Value Creation and Consumer Psychology

Sample guest lectures and co-curricular activities:

- Luxury atelier visit
- Sotheby's Art Curator: 'The Auction House as a Luxury Institution
- Artist Studio Visit: Self-Branding in Action
- Bergdorf Goodman

Week 4: Responsible Luxury and New Frontiers

Focus: The final week looks toward the future of luxury, with an emphasis on responsibility, innovation, and transformation. Students explore sustainability, ethical sourcing, circular business models, as well as the growing demand for transparency and purpose-driven brands. The week also examines emerging frontiers such as digital luxury, NFTs, virtual real estate, and AI-driven personalization. Students synthesize course insights to envision how luxury brands can balance heritage with innovation in an evolving global landscape.

Sample seminars:

- Digital luxury: AI styling, virtual fashion, NFTs
- Is Sustainable Luxury an Oxymoron?
- Fakes & Frauds: Do Dupes Help Luxury Business?

Sample guest lectures and co-curricular activities:

- Museum of Modern Art
- Sustainable Fashion: Upcycling and Responsible Sourcing
- Managing a Luxury Business: Behind-the-Scenes Boutique Visit

Suggested Readings:

- Kapferer, J.-N., & Bastien, V. (2025). *The Luxury Strategy: Break The Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands* (3rd ed.). Kogan Page.