Course Overview
In today’s digital-centric and customer first world, it’s crucial that brands learn how to adapt and adjust quickly while staying true to their core brand DNA. With new channels for reaching and engaging consumers shifting as rapidly as consumer expectations, brands have the ability to launch products, reach new audiences, and build awareness with unprecedented speed and efficiency. This has resulted in a dramatic shift in the retail landscape. Many of the digitally native brands are opening physical stores and traditional retailers are rapidly trying to evolve the in-store experience, face closure, or worse bankruptcy. This has sparked a rise in legacy brands creating and adopting new buzzwords ranging from “digital transformation” to “center of digital excellence” all in an effort to fight for their very survival and avoid debating the “retail apocalypse.”

Is this the end game for retail? Ecommerce has been around since the early to mid 1990’s when web browsers and secure transactions were followed by the launch of Amazon and eBay helping to fuel the rapid growth in online shopping. Today if we asked students, practitioners, retailers, and consumers to define what modern retail looks like we tend to gravitate towards omni channel. Does this mean that we are witnessing another evolution for today’s retail and direct to consumer brands? Why is it that many brands are all talking about omni channel but very few are moving beyond a conversation to reality and making this an imperative?

This will not be a typical course; my goal is to ensure that you are well versed in what it takes to be a modern retail from terminology to basic fundamentals. This class will be a hybrid of a consulting engagement for Hill House Home, a New York based direct to consumer home brand with a flagship located on Bleecker Street. Students will have the opportunity to hear directly from their founder, Nell Diamond during a brand overview, brief discovery and Q&A session. In addition, students will conduct store visits, and focus on core areas to provide a marketing plan setting up Hill House Home with the ability to accelerate their growth and fend off competitive threats to succeed as a modern retailer. The final deliverable and assignment (50% of the student’s grade) of the class will be an in-person group presentation to their founder and CEO.

Course Objectives:
Expose you to real-world examples, strategies, concepts, and behind the scenes on how existing brands and new brands – with a focus on retail - are facing the challenge of taking a series of overused buzzwords and translating them to a meaningful path to execution. In addition, this course will focus on providing students with real world knowledge of the following key topics to ensure they can make an immediate impact:

• Define and understand what omni channel means for today’s direct to consumer brands and the challenges they face in developing a winning strategy
• Understand business metrics that rationalize a cross channel digital marketing strategy, high level models, and measurable KPIs
• Ability to read and understand a digital/ecommerce P&L and operating approach
• Understand and build a roadmap that drives impact based on people, process, and technology
- Understand the optimal marketing mix allocation, budgeting, and best practices across all channels
- Segment consumers and audience to drive relevant channel and messaging strategy centered around cost per acquisition, lifetime value, and cohort models
- Quickly and accurately understand audience and consumer behavior leveraging data and analytics
- Understand core components of e-commerce/technology platforms that unlock the ability for growth transformation
- Become acquainted with the next generation of tools and methodologies to drive experimentation and innovation in a digital and mobile first landscape
- Ability to become marketer of the future in capabilities and knowledge that deliver best in class marketing and retail experience
- Develop strategy for today's in store experience
- How to maximize distribution channels that enable greater product speed to customers
- Explore modern retail concepts from resellers, marketplaces, to big box and Amazon

**Course Outline (subject to change)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Pillar</th>
<th>Key Topics</th>
<th>Guest Speaker</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 29</td>
<td>Course Overview/Introduction to Modern Retailing</td>
<td>Course Outline Assignments Group Project Today's Landscape Modern Retail Framework Customers (new to file and retention) Revenue</td>
<td>Nell Diamond – CEO and Founder, Hill House Home</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 12</td>
<td>Customer Focus</td>
<td>Segments and Personas Customer Journey: An Introduction Customer Acquisition Customer Retention In store experience</td>
<td>TBD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 19</td>
<td>Capabilities to support the customer experience: Roadmap and Technology</td>
<td>Group Assignment check in Quick Glimpse into Investors and Competitive Roadmap and Projects Solutions and Technology Ecommerce</td>
<td>Depop</td>
<td>Store Visit Assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 26</td>
<td>Measurement: Data, KPIs, and Customer Journey</td>
<td>Data Overview and KPIs Assignment Checkpoint</td>
<td>Tasso Argyros - CEO and Founder Action IQ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLEASE NOTE: This class is intended to provide a high-level overview and introductions to initial retail concepts. Given the short nature and elective format it is not possible to go into a deep dive on every topic. However, for deeper exploration I am available to meet with students outside of class.

When it's all said and done what's in it for you?
- My availability and resources: email at sal2230@columbia.edu or scottlux@mac.com
- Ask me anything coffee sessions
- Introductions/Networking: connect with me at https://www.linkedin.com/in/scottlux and more than happy to make any introductions

Grading
This course requires individual effort as well as teamwork and collaboration. You will need to participate in a group project throughout the course, splitting up work and collaborating efficiently, resulting in a final presentation on the last day of class
  - Class Participation 30%
    - Attendance – 15%
    - Class Participation – 15%
    - Class participation is measured by engagement in class as tracked by me and the TA. We will base this on participation in class discussions, asking questions, and following classroom polices -specifically no device usage in class.
  - Individual Work 20%
    - Store visit assignment
  - Group Project 50%
    - Hill House Home Presentation
    - All students in the group will receive the same grade as it is shared accountability in the final recommendation to Hill House Home
    - It is required that all students are present on the final day of class to receive full credit for the group project
**Group Project**

Using what you learn throughout the course each group will present a marketing strategy on the final day of class. Each group should take into consideration the level of investment, effort, and capabilities that will pivot the brand more aggressively into an omni channel experience and deliver on their revenue target (TBD) and brand objectives. Each group will make a 20-minute presentation consisting of on the final day of class. Each group must provide an executive summary along with their presentation or as part of their presentation on the final day of class. It is your responsibility to seek out and ask any relevant questions that will allow you to formulate a well-informed presentation. Please refer to the separate document on the group project (to be provided prior to the first day of class).

**Classroom Policies:**

**Late Work:**

Late work will not be accepted unless an arrangement has been made and agreed upon by Professor Lux at least 48 hours in advance of the assignment due date/deadline. Please refer to Canvas for all up to date information as this syllabus is subject to change. Assignments are due on the date specified for two reasons: 1) This is a real client engagement; same expectations apply is if you were working directly for Hill House Home. If you are late with your work, someone has to pick up the slack to make sure the project stays on track. 2) Store visits are foundational to the group project and final presentation.

**Attendance:**

We only have 6 sessions and to prosper in this class, you must attend every session. I understand that conflicts arise, and I ask that you email at least 48 hours in advance of a class if you need to request an excused absence otherwise it will be noted as unexcused. Aligned with Core culture, **students who miss more than 2 classes (UNEXCUSED or EXCUSED absences) will receive a maximum course grade of P. Students who miss more than three of classes (combination of excused and/or unexcused absences) will receive an F in the course.** Please review your schedule in advance of this class and if you will have conflicts please take that in consideration for staying enrolled in the class – especially the week of Thanksgiving.

**Confidentiality:**

You will be provided with highly sensitive information during the duration of the course. **This information and course materials shall not be shared with anyone.** Furthermore, any discussions around the digital strategy of the client are to be kept strictly confidential.

**Electronic Etiquette**

As much as I love technology, to get the most value out of the course you may not use your laptop and/or cell phone use during class. While some of you may like to use your laptop to take notes and to look up content to follow along with the class; there will be instances that it will be too tempting to not check your email or fill a momentary lull. Furthermore, laptop use can be distracting to your fellow classmates. **If you have a laptop and cell phone, it must be stored during class.** All other electronic devices (tablets, etc.) are also prohibited during class time. Please respect this policy during class and especially when our guest speakers are presenting. If you do not adhere to this policy, it will result in a reduction of your class participation score and overall grade. The TA and I will be monitoring this throughout the course.

Here are a few reference links if you want to follow the laptop in the classroom studies or just use Google ☺


Final Notes:

- Please be **on time and present** for every session (attendance will be tracked). To receive full credit for attendance you must stay until the end of the class unless you email the professor at least 48 hours in advance and have prior approval.
- We will have a 15-minute break and around 5:30 each class and our guest speakers will present around 6:20/6:30 to 7:15 pm ET. Students are expected to return from the break on time and be respectful of our guest speakers.
- Expect cold-calling.
- Please bring your nameplates to every class.
- Participating in a meaningful way is expected and part of your participation grade.
- Being respectful of the professor and your fellow students (adhering to the Code of Conduct in the classroom and no device policy).
- Final Project: Students who miss the final presentation and do not coordinate with the Professor and their team to make it up during an agreed upon time will receive a zero for the Group Project grade. As a reminder this is 50% of the grade and I encourage you to check your schedule in advance to ensure that you have no conflicts with being in attendance on the final day of class.

Course Roadmap
This is provided as an outline for the class. Depending on in class discussion we may not cover all of the topics on the specified dates below. I reserve the right to alter the roadmap and make adjustments to the lecture and roadmap in real time. I am always happy to meet or discuss on a call any topics in further detail. Remember retail is in the moment and does not always follow a precise schedule and you should always be prepared to pivot or adjust.

**Week 1: Introduction to Modern Retailing: Today’s landscape**

**Objectives:** Students will be introduced to purpose, objectives, structure, and expectation of the course and the place of digital within the role of the retail experience. Students will hear from Nell Diamond, the founder and CEO of Hill House Home and will be briefed on the group project expectations.

The customer is in control of today’s retail experience - and is channel agnostic. The reality is most customers are introduction to a brand through social and their digital experience is primarily shaped through their mobile device and superior customer experience. This begs the question as to the role of a physical store in the customers’ needs and expectations. We will explore brands that are clear direct to consumer leaders, those that are store focused and come from more of a “traditional model”, ecommerce focused brands, and brands that are clear laggards in the space. In 2019 much of the press focused on the demise of retail stores and brands with store closures from Barney’s, Gap, J Crew and the Bankruptcy of Forever 21. Even Peloton is now facing challenges in getting its IPO launched. There is hope, we are seeing a re-emergence in retail and many brands were investing in digital transformation. However, one concept that has not changed and is foundation to any brands survival is revenue growth and this cannot happen without a customer first obsession.
1. Today’s Agenda
   a. Background on Scott Lux
   b. Course outline and overview – syllabus review
   c. What will you get out of the class?
   d. Grading approach and methodology
   e. Why Omni Channel and what will you take away over the 6 week course?
   f. What does today’s Retail and DTC landscape look like?
   g. The basic formula: revenue, customer acquisition and retention
   h. Key takeaways

2. Who is Scott Lux
3. Grading methodology
4. What does modern retailing look like?
5. Is omni channel the way forward? Is it the only way to put the customer first and embrace their modern decision making?
6. Is the retail apocalypse over?
7. Existing companies playing defense – just getting the basics done – but there are exceptions
8. New era of digital native companies - and those playing offense
9. Key functional areas
10. Organizational challenges
11. Can we look beyond retail? A bit of perspective
12. What sectors are leading the charge
13. Who is trying but still lagging? Will they survive
14. What does success look like in terms of revenue and customers

**Week 2: Customer Experience, Acquisition, and Retention**

**Objectives:** Students will understand the need for customer segmentation and the acquisition and retention planning process. They will be introduced to properly assess the external and internal conditions within which the marketing objectives could be achieved in order to set the proper foundation for subsequent decisions.

Many brands still operate in a silo and are focusing their efforts on bringing their brand experience to life through digital. Other brands have focused on reimagining their store experience. Often times this leads to a fragmented experience with different agendas and perspectives. To be successful in today’s direct to consumer world a brand must strike a balance between the two channels while not losing the human element within the store experience. This all starts with an understanding of your customer data and segments and developing a differentiated cross channel experience to meet their needs and drive the right behavior to drive successful acquisition and retention strategies.

1. Customer expectations are changing – digital capabilities are transforming the retail experience giving the customer more control than ever
2. Customer data and segmentation – all customers are not equal
3. How do you uncover the voice of the customer and understand their expectations?
4. Identifying high value opportunities
5. Personas - bringing life to segments
6. Introduction to the customer journey
7. Customer Acquisition
   a. Awareness
   b. Digital is the most efficient form of customer acquisition

8. Customer Retention
   a. Customer programs to support acquisition and retention strategies
   b. Loyalty and perks drive retention
   c. Do you need a platform, or can you fake it?
   d. In store experience – don’t believe the hype – it’s all about people
   e. But what about the store of the future
   f. Clienteling

9. Site experience/Registered users
10. Personalization / Recommendations
11. Analytics and attribution modeling
12. Optimize the experience
13. Impact of product – merchandising in store and online

Week 3: Capabilities to support the Customer Experience: New Business Models, Technology + Operations

Objectives: The students will learn how technologies support the customer experience and newer capabilities like personalization, AI, AR, VR, Voice Command are going to change retail and ecommerce. We will explore new business models that are starting to have a greater impact on fashion and retail: rental, resellers, and marketplaces. Students will also learn the key “back of house” operational requirements that are needed to drive a more efficient and customer centric experience.

People, technology, and process represent the foundational components in developing a unified transformation strategy. Students must be able to develop roadmap that establishes core best practices, experimentation and optimization, and of course innovation. Students will learn how to balance their roadmap with the need for short/near term performance (retail is in the moment) with mid/long term strategy that establishes differentiation and relevancy. Consumers now demand real time access to information (for example: store inventory) and leading brands must be able to have the technology and operations to own the end-to-end omni channel experience. During this session we will explore the impact of new business models and whether or not it makes sense to pivot or adopt a new approach.

1. Ecommerce is complex in an omni channel world - Digitization of Commerce
2. Critical to support customer journey and engagement across all channels
3. Prioritization is both cost and opportunity cost
4. Cost benefit analysis for all capabilities
5. Where are competitors moving
6. What is strategically important to your business now & in the future
7. What will drive value for your business
8. Business requirements - foundational and defines what are we trying to solve
9. Platforms and capabilities to drive commerce anytime and anywhere
10. What’s the core tech stack needed in today’s ecosystem
11. Online payments
12. Data
13. Email Platforms
Week 4: Data and Digital Marketing

Objectives: Students will learn the different strategies and tactics to define KPI’s and “proof points” in measuring the customer experience and drive towards revenue objectives. We will explore additional metrics that could be used to generate traffic to online and in-store, and how to select the proper success metrics & KPIs for digital marketing as well as analyze the actual achievements against benchmarks. Students also will learn the different strategies and tactics that could be used to optimize the conversion of traffic into actual purchases.

While data and digital marketing has been a staple for most brands, very few have moved beyond talking about omni channel capabilities and features (think pick up in store, magic mirrors, endless aisle). Furthermore, few brands have refocused their efforts on understanding how to reach digital first consumers and driving an interactions and purchases at all touch points. In this session students will learn how to leverage data to drive, measure, and optimize the relevant business drivers and customer experience.

1. Let’s start with Data – its drives digital and is foundational for exceeding customer expectations
2. Why it so critical?
3. Identify Sources
4. How to bring it all together
5. Building and driving awareness
6. Consideration
7. Conversion
8. Adoption
9. Retention
10. Expansion
11. Audience management and optimization
12. Managing paid channels
13. Managing free channels
14. Social Media
15. Measurement and reporting
16. Cross channel campaigns – myth or reality
17. Personalization
Week 5: Are there other considerations? What’s next? How do we bring it all together?

**Objectives:** After spending the first few sessions on establishing a foundation, students will shift their focus to exploring what other elements should be considered in a successful omni channel strategy.

In this session we will explore the impact Amazon and verticals outside retail are having on influencing shopping and customer behaviors and expectations.

1. What about Amazon, Farfetch, and marketplaces
2. International
3. Entrepreneurial + Social responsibility
4. Is it only about retail? Are the other successful verticals out there becoming commerce enabled?
5. Do agencies help or hurt
6. Store of the future - Hype vs reality
7. Creative
8. The retail and digital challenge and framework
9. Growing and retaining customer base
10. Allow customers to buy products when it meets their needs and, on their terms, and their timeline
11. Improve operational efficiency
12. Determine what success look likes and how its measured and optimized – our work is never finished
13. Develop a sensible long-range plan with proof points
14. Always keep expenses in check

**Week 6: Group Presentations**

Students will present their final project and discuss how their recommendation will drive meaningful impact for Hill House Home.