Luxury sells. The luxury sector has more than trebled since 1994. Yet there is a paradox here: businesses expect to grow, but luxury has historically been defined as rare, exclusive, or exceptional. Can luxury continue to expand and still be luxury? What forms of luxury might be suited to an era when sustainability and social inequality are among consumers’ most pressing political concerns?

In this course, we will first examine how the definition of luxury has changed with time and what its development tells us about society and culture. We will then take a sustained look at luxury industries today (focusing on two case studies) before turning our attention to predictions for luxury’s future. Our readings throughout the semester will be drawn from many Liberal Arts disciplines (including history, social theory, anthropology, economics, literature, and religious studies) as well as from business. The course aims both to teach you something about the luxury space today and to inform how you think about framing and solving business questions more generally.

This course satisfies the Intensive Writing requirement, and in it we will think carefully about both reading and writing. Our weekly readings will average 100-150 pages, and will be drawn from many disciplines (including history, social theory, anthropology, economics, literature, and religious studies). Students should be prepared to present their own work and to comment constructively on each others’ writing. Final grades will be based on: class participation; writing and re-writing a very short paper (3-4 pages); writing a slightly longer paper on an assigned topic; researching and writing a longer paper on a topic of your own choice. This is a demanding course; it is my hope that it will also be an especially rewarding one.

Course Requirements and Grading

Final grades will be calculated on the basis of:

class participation—15%;
four short reports (1.5-2 single-spaced pages) on assigned readings—5% each (see Canvas for details), 20% total;
writing and re-writing a short paper (4 pages)—each version 7.5%;
writing a short paper (5-6 pages) on an assigned topic—20%;
final report on a luxury firm, area, issue of your choice (8-10 pages)—30%.
**Policy on Attendance and Participation:** You are expected to attend all classes. **If you miss more than 2 sessions, you may be in danger of failing the course.** Remember that being present—even being present and talking—is not necessarily the same as constructive participation! Please do not disrupt class by attending to personal matters (such as reading e-mail, answering a cell phone, sending text messages, or eating).

**ALL STUDENTS are required to have completed the Key Readings (those listed on this handout) before each class.** No excuse for failure to do the reading will be accepted! All readings can be found on-line via the Library’s website, the course Canvas site, or a simple web search. **If you have difficulty accessing the readings, or with understanding them, please let me know immediately.** I will try to answer all e-mail messages within 48 hours (rlspang@indiana.edu).

**Disabilities:** I will do everything I can to make this course accessible to students with varying needs and those who require academic accommodation for a disability. If you will require such support, please contact me as soon as possible (in office hours, after class, or by e-mail). University policy requires that you establish eligibility via the Office of Disability Services for Students in Wells Library (W-302); telephone: 855-7578; (http://studentaffairs.indiana.edu/disability-services-students/index.shtml) This Office will provide you with a memorandum specifying the academic modifications and accommodations to which you are entitled.

**Policy on deadlines for written work:** Extensions to the deadline will only be granted in the case of serious illness, bereavement, or other grave personal circumstances. Students facing such circumstances should notify me as soon as possible. In the absence of any valid excuse, late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for each day late (i.e., from a “B” to a “B-”). An assignment will be counted as a “day” late as soon as it misses the deadline (i.e., work due at the beginning of class will be marked down if it is submitted in the middle or at the end of class).

**Policy on Academic Honesty:** All papers must include consistently formatted notes and a full bibliography. Ignorance of scholarly reference form is no excuse and papers submitted without full references will be returned unmarked. (If you need help with this, please e-mail or come see me in office hours.)

**Plagiarism and misuse of sources constitute intellectual theft and will result in automatic failure of the course and a report being filed with the Dean’s Office.** Plagiarism means claiming somebody else’s words, ideas, or analysis as your own. To avoid plagiarism, you must cite the source of all material in your work that is neither “general knowledge” (e.g., “the twentieth century is the period from 1900 to 2000”) nor your own interpretation. Please see the course Canvas site for paper topics, guidelines on essay writing, and explanation of proper reference format.

This syllabus is provisional and may change throughout the semester. If they differ, information found on the course Canvas site supersedes that provided here.
Luxury: For and Against

Jan. 09 Can we define luxury? (no required reading)

Jan. 11 Luxury Now

Jan. 16 Martin Luther King Day (class does not meet)

Jan. 18 Luxury in the Twenty-First Century
Rachel Sanderson, “Luxury goods companies learn to mix craft and tech,” *FT* (Nov. 20, 2018).

Jan. 23 Luxury: For and Against
* First short write-up (about Cloutier article) due at noon. Every student is responsible for this assignment. See Canvas site for details.

Luxury: Medieval and Modern

Jan. 25 Luxury: Ancient, Archaeological, Magical
Jan. 30  Modern Wealth
Sam Bowles, Wendy Carlin, et. al., CORE economics (on-line), chapter 1.
Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776),
Book I, chapters 1-2.

Feb. 01  Religious Practice and Expense in the Middle Ages: A Luxury?
Xinru Liu, “Silks and Religion in Eurasia, c. 600-1200,” Journal of World History 6:1
Adrian Bell and Richard Dale, “The Medieval Pilgrimage Business,” Enterprise &
Peter McNeil and Giorgio Riello, “Luxury, the Church and the Court…” in their Luxury,

Feb. 06  Luxury: East and West
Maxine Berg, “In Pursuit of Luxury: Global History and British Consumer Goods in the
Helen Clifford, “Chinese Wallpaper: From Canton to Country House,” in Finn and Smith
eds., The East India Company at Home (2016), book available online via JSTOR.

* Second short report due. See Canvas site for details.

Feb. 08  The Eighteenth-Century Luxury Debate
Adam Smith, An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations (1776),
Book I, chapters 1-2.
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences [also known as Rousseau’s
“First Discourse”] (1750).

Feb. 13  Shopping, Sex, and Design
Emile Zola, Au bonheur des dames [The Ladies’ Paradise] (1883), selection.
“Kleptomania: The Case of Mrs. Castle,” British Medical Journal (November 14, 1896),
pp. 1462-1463.
Culture (1993), chapter one.

Feb. 15  [no class; Professor Spang out of town]

Feb. 20  When Less is More
Laura Sodano, “The Luxury of Keeping it Simple,” YUN (Berlin), Nov. 15, 2018, on-line.
optional Margaret Dilloway, “What White Western Audiences Don’t Understand about
Marie Kondo’s ‘Tidying Up,’” HuffPost (January 22, 2019).
Case studies: Hotels and Diamonds

Feb. 22  Markets and Customers
Sam Bowles, Wendy Carlin, et. al., CORE economics (on-line), chapters 7, 10.

Feb. 27  Hotel Life

Mar. 1  Hotel Builders and Workers

Mar. 6  Hotel and other Service Workers
Izabella Kaminska, “No room for tips in the gig economy,” Financial Times (December 18, 2016).

Mar. 8  Hotel Luxury
Websites of Shangri-La Hotel (London), Dolder Grand Hotel (Zurich), Ballyfin Demesne (Ireland), Fairmont Pacific Rim (Vancouver), One and Only Royal Mirage (Dubai), and Southern Ocean Lodge (Kangaroo Island, Australia)—look at several of these.

HAVE A LUXURIOUS SPRING BREAK

Mar. 20  Having it all
F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Diamond as Big as the Ritz (1922).
Emily Post, Etiquette (1922), at least chapters 12 (“The Well-Appointed House”) and 25 (“The Country House and its Hospitality”) [on-line or via Canvas].

Mar. 22  Rings and Things
De Beers’ “Right-Hand Ring” campaign (2003), on-line.
David McAdams and Cate Reavis, DeBeers’s Diamond Dilemma (2008), MIT Sloan School Case Studies, on-line.
Mar. 27  Dealing in Diamonds

* Short report due.

Mar. 29  Diamonds, People, Dirt

Future Luxuries

April 03  Luxury: How to Manage It

April 05  Luxury: How to Sell It

April 10  Luxury—Extended, Expanded, Exported
Lindsay Whipp, “Mondelez sinks its teeth into China’s chocolate market,” Financial Times (July 26, 2016).
Andrew Hill, “Aston Martin risks its soul among the fun-free luxury brands” Financial Times (Sept. 3, 2018).
Laura McReddie-Doak, “Tiffany chief seeks an end to old ideas of luxury,” Financial Times (Nov. 9, 2018).

April 12  Faking It

April 17
The Ethics of Luxury
Olaf Storbeck, “German manufacturers stand up to Far Right’s rise,” *Financial Times* (November 9, 2018).

April 19
Is Luxury Sustainable?
Laura Fraser, “Buzzy foodie brands have deep roots in rural California. Is it being ruined?” *The Guardian* Nov. 9, 2018.

April 24
What’s a Necessity, Anyway?

* All students have a short report due at noon. See Canvas for details.

May 1 and May 6: Student presentations on final projects.

May 8 (no class): Final written work due by 5:00 p.m. You should each be researching a luxury firm, area, or specific issue and preparing a 8-10 page write up in which you present the current situation, relevant historical context, and future prospects.