



NYU | STERN

RETAIL STRATEGY

MKTG-UB.88.001

Fall 2025: Wednesdays, September 3 – October 15, 6:20 – 9:00pm

Becky Abtalion

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Stern School of Business
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Contact

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Open office hours prior to class

One-on-one virtual meetings by appointment

Classroom

Tisch UC25

Course Description & Objectives

This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the forces that shape the increasingly competitive and rapidly evolving retail industry. We will explore the demographic, economic, competitive and technological developments that are transforming the marketplace as well as how parameters impact consumer behavior and the effectiveness of retailers' business models. As retailing is constantly evolving due to new entrants and the use of technology, accelerated by the recent pandemic, we will explore what defines success for new players and failure for those losing market share.

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

- Analyze retailers' customer and competitive positioning
- Evaluate retail concepts and their performance across formats and value propositions
- Understand the fundamentals of retail operations and strategy
- Use tools used by equity analysts when valuing retail companies

Course Materials

Classes will be highly interactive, referencing several case studies and supplemental reading materials. A reader containing Harvard Business Cases will be accessible through the Harvard Business Cases website. A link will be provided for you on Brightspace along with supplemental articles and book excerpts used for the course.

Grading

This highly interactive class mixes both individual and collaborative assignments to apply course concepts.

1. **Case analysis and discussion (30%)** Students will be asked to analyze three cases to be discussed in class, along with a concise written evaluation addressing critical questions provided by the course instructor. Thoughtful answers should include references to the case, public sources, and personal experiences.
2. **Group presentation (30%)** Students will divide into self-selected case groups, select a retailer, and prepare a strategic analysis along with potential growth opportunities to be presented to a panel of retail experts.
3. **Exam (20%)** Students will take a brief exam in our final session to demonstrate critical thinking and an understanding of key concepts covered in the course.
4. **Class participation (20%)** Students are expected to attend all classes in-person and contribute to discussion. Students should exhibit critical thinking and an understanding of course material while also encouraging the participation of others through a high-level of engagement. Quality contributions and insights earn top marks, including asking thoughtful questions of guest speakers or sharing unique perspective.

Instructor

Becky Abtalion is a fashion retail executive focused on the digital space. She has worked for some of the largest best-in-class brands and retailers in the world, including Ralph Lauren, Louis Vuitton, and Macy's. After starting her career as a department store merchant, she transitioned into general management for e-commerce in both direct-to-consumer and wholesale. In her current role at Ralph Lauren, she is responsible for securing lead online positioning for the brand with top retailers across North America.

Becky received her MBA from Stern in 2016 through the Langone program. Focusing on luxury marketing and international business, she also spent a semester abroad at SDA Bocconi in Milan.

Guest speakers from the industry will also join class sessions to foster dialogue and an expert panel will provide feedback on final presentations.

Detailed Course Outline

Session 1 (September 3): Identifying retail market trends

Introduce the course and discuss structure of retail industry including types of retailers, market segments and channels, evolving market trends, and the retail life cycle.

Recommended Reading & Assignment:

Read articles about current market trends and complete pre-course survey (posted on Brightspace)

Session 2 (September 10): Evaluating retail performance

Provide an overview of the key financial metrics used by equity analysts to evaluate the health of a retailer and the internal performance metrics used by retail executives to monitor the day-to-day business.

Recommended Reading & Assignment:

Review recent earnings report for one of select retailers (posted on Brightspace)

Self-select teams for group presentation (complete sign-up sheet by end of class)

Session 3 (September 17): Formulating strategy in retailing

Discuss strategic positioning and execution, customer segmentation, merchandising strategy, and key points of differentiation.

Required Reading & Assignment:

Ron Johnson: A Career in Retail (in digital coursepack)

Prepare for discussion and submit written answers to 3 questions (via Brightspace)

Session 4 (September 24): Capitalizing on e-commerce & optimizing omni-channel

Highlight the importance of digital commerce in the retail landscape and demonstrate how advances in inventory management and technology drive connectivity across channels, increase speed-to-market, and deliver higher service levels and productivity.

Required Reading & Assignment:

Walmart Inc. Takes on Amazon.com (in digital coursepack)

Prepare for discussion and submit written answers to 3 questions (via Brightspace)

Session 5 (October 1): Forecasting the future of retailing

Dive into innovation in the retail space and consider what will become the store of the future, including new store formats, connectivity with customers, unique services, and increased efficiencies.

Required Reading & Assignment:

Stitch Fix - A Blue Ocean Retailer in the AI World (in digital coursepack)

Prepare for discussion and submit written answers to 3 questions (via Brightspace)

Optional: Share the framework of your final presentation for feedback

Session 6 (October 8): Group Presentations

Each group to present their strategic analysis and recommended growth opportunities to a panel of retail experts.

Required Assignment: Final presentation PPT Slides, including notes, due 24 hours before class

Session 7 (October 15): Exam

Complete an in-class exam of multiple-choice, short answer, and long answer questions (with opportunity for extra credit) to demonstrate understanding of key course concepts.

This course will align with all Stern policies.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Our [undergraduate Academics Pillar](#) states that *we take pride in our well-rounded education and approach our academics with honesty and integrity*. Indeed, integrity is critical to all that we do here at NYU Stern. As members of our community, all students agree to abide by the NYU Academic Integrity Policies as well as the NYU Stern Student Code of Conduct, which includes a commitment to:

- Exercise integrity in all aspects of one's academic work including, but not limited to, the preparation and completion of exams, papers and all other course requirements by not engaging in any method or means that provides an unfair advantage.
- Clearly acknowledge the work and efforts of others when submitting written work as one's own. Ideas, data, direct quotations (which should be designated with quotation marks), paraphrasing, creative expression, or any other incorporation of the work of others should be fully referenced.
- Refrain from behaving in ways that knowingly support, assist, or in any way attempt to enable another person to engage in any violation of the Code of Conduct. Our support also includes reporting any observed violations of this Code of Conduct or other School and University policies that are deemed to adversely affect the NYU Stern community.

The Stern Code of Conduct and Judiciary Process applies to all students enrolled in Stern courses.

Additional information on community expectations can be found [here](#).

To help ensure the integrity of our learning community, prose assignments you submit to NYU Brightspace will be submitted to Turnitin. Turnitin will compare your submission to a database of prior submissions to Turnitin, current and archived Web pages, periodicals, journals, and publications. Additionally, your document will become part of the Turnitin database.

GENERAL CONDUCT & BEHAVIOR

Students are also expected to maintain and abide by the highest standards of professional conduct and behavior. Please familiarize yourself with Stern's Policy in Regard to In-Class Behavior & Expectations

[Default Policies for Stern Courses](#)

[Undergraduate Academic Policies](#)

[NYU Student Conduct Policy](#)

GRADING GUIDELINES

At NYU Stern, we strive to create courses that challenge students intellectually and that meet the Stern standards of academic excellence. To ensure fairness and clarity of grading, the Stern faculty have agreed that for elective courses the individual instructor or department is responsible for determining reasonable grading guidelines.

This course will be graded according to the Marketing department standards.

STUDENT ACCESSIBILITY

If you will require academic accommodation of any kind during this course, you must notify me at the beginning of the course and provide a letter from the Moses Center for Student Accessibility ([212-998-4980](tel:212-998-4980), mosescsa@nyu.edu) verifying your registration and outlining the accommodations they recommend. If you will need to take an exam at the Moses Center for Student Accessibility, you must submit a completed Exam Accommodations Form to them at least one week prior to the scheduled exam time to be guaranteed accommodation. For more information, visit the [CSA website](#).

STUDENT WELLNESS

Our aim is for students to be as successful academically as they can, and to help them overcome any impediments to that. Bookmark the NYU Stern Well-being Resource Hub (<https://www.stern.nyu.edu/wellbeing>) for existing services at NYU and Stern covering a wide variety of topics including financial well-being, relationship well-being, mental well-being, and more. Any student who may be struggling and believes this may affect their performance in this course is urged to contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (see also the Student Accessibility section of this syllabus) at 212-998-4980 to discuss academic accommodations. If mental health assistance is needed, call the NYU's 24/7 Wellness Exchange hotline 212-443-9999. Furthermore, please approach me if you feel comfortable doing so. This will enable me to provide relevant resources or referrals. There are also drop in hours and appointments. Find out more [here](#).

NAME PRONUNCIATION AND PRONOUNS

NYU Stern students now have the ability to include their pronouns and name pronunciation in Albert. I encourage you to share your name pronunciation and preferred pronouns this way.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES AND OTHER ABSENCES

NYU's [Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#) states that members of any religious group may, without penalty, absent themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. You must notify me in advance of religious holidays or observances that

might coincide with exams, assignments, or class times to schedule mutually acceptable alternatives. Students may also contact religiousaccommodations@nyu.edu for assistance.

Except for religious observances or other absences that may be required in compliance with nondiscrimination law, this class otherwise requires attendance and participation and cannot accommodate conflicts. Please review all class dates at the start of the semester and review all course requirements to identify any foreseeable conflicts with exams, course assignments, projects, or other items required for participation and attendance. If you are aware of a potential conflict, it is strongly recommended that you do not take this class.

LAPTOPS, CELL PHONES & OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES

This is a highly interactive course and electronic devices are distracting to the class and instructor. Cell phones should be silenced and kept away except during class breaks.

The use of laptops and tablets with keyboards is permitted for the purpose of note-taking during lectures only. However, students should make every effort to avoid distracting their classmates or disrupting the class, including arriving early and choosing a seat that is less distracting for peers. If your device use is considered disruptive by anyone in the class, the instructor will discuss alternatives with you.

INCLUSION

This course strives to support and cultivate diversity of thought, perspectives, and experiences. The intent is to present materials and activities that will challenge your current perspectives with a goal of understanding how others might see situations differently. By participating in this course, it is the expectation that everyone commits to making this an inclusive learning environment for all.