



## COMM 5380 Brand Identity Design

**Term:** Fall 2026

**Course Dates:** Oct 12th, 2026-Dec 05, 2026

**Professor:** Tennille Reneau

**Course Times:** TTh 9:30AM - 10:50AM

**Office Phone:** 903.566.7301

**Classroom:** CAS 106

**Email:** [treneau@uttyler.edu](mailto:treneau@uttyler.edu)

**Office Hours:** Tue 11:30 am -1:30 pm and by appointment)

### Course Description

Theoretical exploration of brand identity design for products, with emphasis on logos as systems that fuel the recognition of that brand, its public perception, and its effectiveness through students envisioning brands design development.

This is a project-based class. Projects are assigned due dates; you'll get the specs on Canvas and submit them there in the required file formats.

### Course Overview

This 7-week graduate course examines the strategic and creative dimensions of brand identity design, focusing on how visual systems — especially logos — shape product recognition, public perception, and overall brand effectiveness. Using Alina Wheeler's *Designing Brand Identity* as the core text, students will analyze theoretical foundations while developing a complete competing brand identity for a carbonated water product.

The semester project, Spark & Rival, asks students to research an existing sparkling water brand, then invent and fully brand a rival that can compete with it. Emphasis is placed on brand as story, logo systems, visual identity, packaging, marketing applications, and a recorded video pitch.

The course is fully asynchronous. Students work through weekly modules at their own pace within set deadlines. Interaction occurs via discussion forums, peer feedback, and progressive project submissions. Optional virtual office hours are available by appointment.

### Brand as Story

Branding is not just a logo, a color palette, or a list of product features. At its core, branding is the story people remember about a product, experience, or idea. People rarely remember specifications — they remember how a brand made them feel and the simple narrative it told.

In this course, the strongest work will start with a clear competitive insight, build a simple ownable story around that insight, and make the name, logo, packaging, and voice all support that story so that when someone sees the brand, they immediately get what it stands for.

## Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Explain theoretical principles of brand identity design and their impact on recognition and perception.
- Analyze how logo systems and visual identities contribute to brand effectiveness.
- Conduct competitive research and develop a clear brand strategy for a product category.
- Develop comprehensive brand identity concepts, with a strong focus on logo design and application systems.
- Apply identity systems across packaging and marketing touchpoints with consistency and craft.
- Produce professional-level brand design deliverables and present them effectively in a recorded video pitch.

## Required Textbooks and Readings

- **Wheeler, Alina. *Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Whole Branding Team* (latest edition).**
- Sketch Pad (small to 9 by 12) max size

## Recommended Software & Tools

- If you need a **ADOBE Creative Cloud subscription** for your personal computer that can run adobe here is the link, <https://www.adobe.com/creativecloud/plans.html>. 19.99 for per month first year for students, after that 39.99 per year.
- **OR A PC OR MACINTOSH COMPUTER** - Capable of running graphic applications. A minimum of 8 Gb of RAM or more.) Please note everyone one is in a different situation, you may not need to get a computer like this because this is the only class you will use it in that is perfectly fine, Computers are provided in the Lab for students to use.

**Minimum official RAM requirement for all three (current versions): 8 GB.**

Adobe lists this as the bare minimum to install and run Photoshop, Illustrator, and InDesign on both Windows and macOS.

Official Adobe minimums (recent versions)

| App         | Minimum RAM | Recommended RAM |
|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Photoshop   | 8 GB        | 16 GB or more   |
| Illustrator | 8 GB        | 16 GB           |
| InDesign    | 8 GB        | 16 GB           |

### Practical reality

**8 GB** is the absolute floor. You can open the apps and do very light/simple work, but performance will be poor (slow, frequent freezing, heavy use of the scratch disk) especially if you have more than one app open, use large files, many layers, high-resolution images, or complex documents.

**16 GB** is the realistic minimum for comfortable everyday use with these programs.

**32 GB** (or more) is strongly preferred for professional work, multitasking between the apps, large files, many layers/history states, or complex illustrations/layouts.

**Bottom line: Adobe's official minimum is 8 GB, but for any real design work you'll want at least 16 GB, and 32 GB is the sweet spot for smooth performance with Photoshop + Illustrator + InDesign.**

Ideally Adobe Creative Cloud with the tools Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign, are the best, recommended and the professional standard, but if that is not possible here are some programs that can work.

Note Logos need to be created in vectors to resize

- **Figma** (free tier sufficient; primary tool for logo development, systems, and collaboration)
- **Canva** or Placeit / Smartmockups for packaging and marketing mockups
- **Loom, Zoom, or similar** for the final video pitch
- PDF for final portfolio submissions

## Course Structure & Expectations

- Each week contains: short instructor video(s) or written overview, required readings, discussion prompts, and a progressive project assignment.
- All weekly work (discussion posts + assignment) is due by Sunday 11:59 PM (course timezone).
- Students are expected to post an initial discussion response by Thursday and reply to at least two peers by Sunday.
- The Sparkling water brand semester project builds week-by-week into a complete brand identity portfolio + video pitch.
- Late work: 10% deduction per day (maximum 3 days).
- Academic integrity and original work are required. Disclose any AI assistance used for ideation and writing.

## Expected Workload

Approximately 15–18 hours per week, including project work, readings, discussions, and the final video presentation. Weeks 6–7 are the most time-intensive. This aligns with standard expectations for a 3-credit graduate course compressed into 7 weeks.

## Tips for Success in this Course

1. **Participate.** I invite you to engage deeply, ask questions, and talk about the course content with your classmates. You can learn a great deal from discussing ideas and perspectives with your peers and professor. Participation can also help you articulate your thoughts and develop critical thinking skills.
2. **Manage your time.** I get it—students usually juggle a lot, and I know you've got commitments beyond this class. Still, doing your best often means carving out enough dedicated time for coursework. Try scheduling specific blocks of time and ensure you have enough room to finish assignments, allowing extra space for any tech issues that might pop up.
3. **Login regularly.** I recommend that you log in to Canvas several times a week to view announcements, work on assignments etc.

4. **Do not fall behind.** This class moves at a quick pace and each week builds on the previous class content. If you feel you are starting to fall behind, check in with the instructor as soon as possible so we can troubleshoot together. It will be hard to keep up with the course content if you fall behind in the pre-work or post-work.
5. **Use Canvas notification settings.** Pro tip! Canvas can ensure you receive timely notifications in your email or via text. Be sure to enable notifications to be sent instantly or daily. ([Canvas Notification Guide](#))
6. **Ask for help if needed.** If you are struggling with a course concept, reach out to me [treneau@uttyler.edu](mailto:treneau@uttyler.edu) and your classmates for support.

## Graded Course Requirements Information

- **Weekly Discussion Participation & Peer Feedback (25%)** Selected modules include discussion prompts related to brand identity theory, competitive analysis, logo systems, visual consistency, and brand storytelling. Quality participation requires a thoughtful initial post by Thursday and meaningful replies to at least two classmates by Sunday. Discussions are intended to connect Wheeler's concepts to the Spark & Rival project and encourage peer critique. Specific guidelines and deadlines are posted in each discussion forum in Canvas.
- **Progressive Project Assignments – Weeks 1–6 (40%)** Students complete a series of progressive deliverables that build the Spark & Rival brand week by week. These include:
  - Competitive Research Summary
  - Brand Strategy One-Pager (name, positioning, audience, personality, USP)
  - Logo exploration and mid-point concepts (showing process is required)
  - Draft Visual Identity System (logo suite, color, typography)
  - Packaging mockups and marketing touchpoints
- Each assignment is submitted in Canvas and demonstrates progressive skill-building in strategy, identity design, and application. Feedback from earlier weeks is expected to inform later work.
- **Final Brand Identity Portfolio, Process Evidence & Video Pitch – Week 7 (35%)** Students submit a complete brand package that includes:
  - Competitive Research Summary
  - Brand Strategy One-Pager
  - Logo Suite + Visual Identity System
  - Packaging mockups (minimum 2 flavors)
  - At least 3 marketing touchpoints
  - Basic brand guidelines
  - Process evidence (sketches, rejected directions, research notes)
  - Self-assessment reflection
  - 5–8 minute recorded video pitch (brand visuals must be visible on screen; person on camera is optional)
- The final project is graded holistically using performance levels (Distinguished 90–100, Proficient 80–89, Developing 70–79, Beginning below 70). A detailed grading sheet and rubric are provided.

## Grading Structure

### Grading Breakdown

| Component                                       | Weight |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------|
| Weekly Discussion Participation & Peer Feedback | 25%    |
| Progressive Project Assignments (Weeks 1–6)     | 40%    |

## Grading Scale

- A - (90% or higher)
- B - (80 - 89%)
- C - (70 - 79%)
- D - (60 - 69%)
- F - (Below 60%)

## Late Work and Make-Up Exams:

- Late work: 10% deduction per day (maximum 3 days).
- Academic integrity and original work are required. Disclose any AI assistance used for ideation and writing.

## University Policies & Student Resources:

University policies and student resources are available on the University website and in Canvas under “Syllabus”. (You may copy or print the following information to include in your syllabus or use the links provided below.)

- [University Policy](#)
- [Student Resources](#)

## Artificial Intelligence Statement

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools’ ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler’s Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler’s Academic Integrity Policy. Refer to the About This Course section of the UT Tyler Syllabus Module for specific information on appropriate use of AI in your course(s).

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- F - (Below 60%)

## Late Work and Make-Up Exams:

### Attendance Policy

This is a fully online course and does not have a traditional attendance policy based on physical presence. Instead, active participation is measured by consistent engagement and timely submission of work.

Submitting assignments by the stated deadlines is considered participation and presence in the course. Students are expected to regularly check Canvas, review course materials and feedback, and meet project due dates. Consistent completion of work by the deadline demonstrates that you are actively participating in the class.

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## Semester Project: Carbonated Water Branding

Research an existing carbonated water (seltzer / sparkling water) brand, then invent and fully brand a competing product. The goal is to create a distinctive new brand that can realistically challenge one of the established players through smart positioning, a strong visual identity, packaging, marketing applications, and a recorded video pitch.

## Category Landscape — Choose One Primary Competitor

### Traditional Seltzers & Light Flavor

- **LaCroix** — Subtle, zero-calorie, zero-sweetener flavors with a cult following.
- **Polar Seltzer** — Exceptionally crisp carbonation and bright profiles.
- **Bubly** — Playful, zero-calorie line with clean, fruit-forward aromas.

### Real Fruit & Bold Flavors

- **Spindrift** — Real squeezed fruit juice; cloudy look and authentic taste.
- **Waterloo** — Strong, punchy, true-to-life fruit aromas without sweeteners.
- **Aura Bora** — Herbal and floral-infused sparkling waters.

### Mineral & Heavy Carbonation

- **Topo Chico** — Mexican mineral water with sharp, long-lasting bubbles.
- **Sanpellegrino & Perrier** — Classic European sparkling mineral waters.
- **Mineragua** — Heavily carbonated Mexican mineral water.
- **Liquid Death** — Mountain water in tallboy cans with aggressive, irreverent branding.

## Calendar of Project, Due Dates

*All assessments and discussions have a **due date** assigned in Canvas.*

*This class is set up in **Category Modules**, not weeks, please keep in mind, to keep track of assignments by weeks look at your Canvas Calendar.*

## Calendar of Project, Mini-Projects, discussion with Due Dates

All weekly discussions and progressive assignments are due Sunday 11:59 PM unless otherwise noted. Thanksgiving week (Nov 22–28) is a full break.

### Week 1: Introduction to Brand Identity Design & Project Launch

Dates: Monday, October 12 – Sunday, October 18, 2026

Due: Sunday, October 18, 11:59 PM

Focus: Course overview, brand as story, role of logos and visual systems, introduction to Carbonated water Brand.

Required Reading: Wheeler — Part 1: Basics.

Discussion: What makes a logo system memorable? How do brands use visual identity to shape perception?

Assignment: Select one primary competitor from the category landscape and begin competitive research.

### Week 2: Brand Strategy & Competitive Research

**Dates: Monday, October 19 – Sunday, October 25, 2026**

**Due: Sunday, October 25, 11:59 PM**

**Focus: Positioning, audience insights, competitive analysis, and opportunity gaps.**

**Required Reading: Early sections of Part 2 (Process – Discovery & Strategy).**

**Discussion: How does thorough research change brand direction? What questions uncover true positioning and white space?**

**Assignment: Submit Competitive Research Summary (analysis of chosen competitor + opportunity gap).**

### **Week 3: Brand Strategy, Naming & Concept**

**Dates: Monday, October 26 – Sunday, November 1, 2026**

**Due: Sunday, November 1, 11:59 PM**

**Focus: Positioning statement, target audience, brand personality, USP, naming, and product concept.**

**Required Reading: Continued Process sections in Part 2.**

**Discussion: What makes a brand name memorable and ownable? How do you balance distinctiveness with clarity?**

**Assignment: Submit Brand Strategy One-Pager (name, positioning, audience, personality, USP, product concept).**

### **Week 4: Logo Systems & Core Identity**

**Dates: Monday, November 2 – Sunday, November 8, 2026**

**Due: Sunday, November 8, 11:59 PM**

**Focus: Logo types, principles, symbolism, exploration of multiple directions, and mid-point critique.**

**Required Reading: Design phases in Part 2.**

**Discussion: What makes a logo work as a system rather than just a mark? How do you balance simplicity with differentiation?**

**Assignment: Develop primary logo variations and initial concepts; participate in mid-point critique.**

### **Week 5: Visual Identity Systems**

**Dates: Monday, November 9 – Sunday, November 15, 2026**

**Due: Sunday, November 15, 11:59 PM**

**Focus: Typography, color, imagery, supporting graphics, and locking the full system.**

**Required Reading: Continued Process sections.**

**Discussion: How do supporting elements reinforce or weaken recognition? How do you maintain consistency with flexibility?**

**Assignment: Present draft visual identity system (logo suite + color + type + key graphic direction).**

### **Week 6: Applications, Packaging & Touchpoints**

**Dates: Monday, November 16 – Sunday, November 22, 2026**

**Due: Sunday, November 22, 11:59 PM**

**Note:** This due date falls at the start of Thanksgiving week. Submit by Sunday Nov 22 so you can fully enjoy the break (Nov 22–28).

**Focus:** Applying the identity to packaging and marketing materials; ensuring system consistency.

**Required Reading:** Application chapters in Part 2.

**Discussion:** How do different touchpoints affect perception? What challenges arise translating a system across packaging and digital?

**Assignment:** Apply identity to packaging mockups (min. 2 flavors) and at least 3 marketing touchpoints. Begin planning video structure.

### **Thanksgiving Break — No Class Work**

**Dates: Sunday, November 22 – Saturday, November 28, 2026**

**No new assignments, discussions, or due dates during this week. Rest and recharge.**

### **Week 7: Final Portfolio, Brand Guidelines & Video Pitch**

**Dates: Sunday, November 29 – Saturday, December 5, 2026**

**Due: Saturday, December 5, 11:59 PM (final day of the term)**

**Focus:** Final refinements, basic brand guidelines, process evidence, and recorded video pitch.

**Required Reading:** Best Practices sections (Part 3).

**Discussion:** How do you evaluate whether a brand identity is successful? Why are brand guidelines essential?

**Assignment:** Submit complete brand identity portfolio + process evidence + 5–8 minute video pitch + self-assessment reflection.

### **Final Project Deliverables (Due December 5)**

**Submit a cohesive brand package (PDF portfolio or equivalent) plus a recorded video pitch. Required components:**

- **Competitive Research Summary** — Analysis of the chosen competitor and opportunity gap
- **Brand Strategy One-Pager** — Name, positioning, audience, personality, USP, product concept
- **Logo Suite** — Primary logo, alternative lockups, icon/mark, basic usage notes
- **Visual Identity System** — Color palette (with codes), typography, key graphic elements
- **Product Packaging Mockups** — At least two can or bottle designs (flavor variants encouraged)
- **Marketing Touchpoints** — At least three applications (social, POS, web hero, OOH, etc.)
- **Basic Brand Guidelines** — Starter rules for logo, color, type, and voice
- **Process Evidence** — Sketches, rejected directions, research notes, or iteration documentation
- **Self-Assessment Reflection** — Short written responses to the provided prompts
- **Final Video Pitch** — 5–8 minute recorded presentation

### **Video Pitch Requirements**

- **Brand visuals must appear on screen** throughout (logo, packaging, identity system, applications). Use screen share, slides, or designed PDF.

- **Person on camera is optional** — on-camera or voice-over only are both acceptable.
- Length: 5–8 minutes. Cover competitive insight → strategy → identity → applications → why this brand can compete.
- Record with Zoom, Loom, QuickTime, phone, or similar. Submit per LMS instructions.

### No Semester Exam (Final project deliverables and presentation)

Note: This is a tentative schedule, and subject to change as necessary – monitor the Assignment page in Canvas for current deadlines. In the unlikely event of a prolonged university closing, or an extended absence from the university, adjustments to the course schedule, deadlines, and assignments will be made based on the duration of the closing and the specific dates missed.

### Project Assessment (Holistic)

The final project is graded holistically as a complete brand, using one overall performance level plus a point score.

| Level                | Points          | Letter | Description                                                                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Distinguished</b> | <b>90–100</b>   | A / A- | Launch-ready. Coherent, distinctive, strong craft. Clear thinking in video. |
| <b>Proficient</b>    | <b>80–89</b>    | B+ / B | Solid & complete. Competes adequately; minor gaps in polish or consistency. |
| <b>Developing</b>    | <b>70–79</b>    | C+ / C | Pieces exist, but cohesion, originality, or craft fall short.               |
| <b>Beginning</b>     | <b>Below 70</b> | D / F  | Incomplete, derivative, or disconnected. Key work missing.                  |

Decide the level first, then place the score inside that band. Incomplete checklist items usually prevent Distinguished. Process evidence and a thoughtful self-assessment can support a higher placement when work is borderline.

### Policies

- **Accessibility:** Contact the instructor early for any accommodations.
- **Communication:** Use the LMS messaging system or designated email, [treneau@uttyler.edu](mailto:treneau@uttyler.edu) Response time typically within 24–48 hours on weekdays.
- **Netiquette:** Professional, constructive, and respectful engagement in all forums is expected.
- **Academic Integrity:** Original work is required. Disclose any AI assistance used for ideation.

*The best projects feel like they could launch tomorrow — clear story, distinctive system, and work that holds together across every touchpoint.*