Overview

This course is called Human Environmental Design, which doesn't explain a whole lot. It's an advanced design course where we will explore brands and identities. A brand is a combination of words, symbols, colors, experiences, feelings, and ideas that describe a product or a company. An identity is the visual representation of that brand. A well designed identity combines color, scale, legibility, semiotics, and application to clearly differentiate itself from the millions of other identities in the marketplace.

Introduction

Previous courses introduced you to the basic theoretical concepts and principles of graphic design, problem-solving techniques, and an introduction to icons, symbols, and logos. In this class, we're going to be working in three main sections. The first part will include research, writing, and concepting before you move to Illustrator. The second part will expand that work into InDesign, where you will develop a document outlining the overall brand strategy. The third part will combine what you learned from the first two to develop an identity for a new client.

Project 1: Developing a Logo

Pick one of the four fictional companies below and research their marketplace:

Tudor '39, a specialty moonshine distillery

Tudor '39 is based in Richmond, Kentucky, and has been distilling moonshine since 1891, using a family recipe that outlasted the state's prohibition laws. They began bottling and selling 80-proof sipping shine in small batches about fifteen years ago. Their family history is colorful and illegal, dating back to the 1700's, but the family sold the company and rights to a Japanese conglomerate in 2011.

Leadfoot Engineering, a monster truck fabricator

Leadfoot designs, builds, and repairs competition monster trucks from their plant in Greenville, North Carolina. They began with the original Leadfoot twenty years ago, and their expertise in fabrication and engine design quickly eclipsed their competition earnings. They now service the East Coast and Midwest stadium circuit with a pair of mobile repair trucks as well as their shop.

Helios Aerospace, a commercial spaceflight company

Helios was founded by a wealthy biotech investor in 1998 to compete for the Ansari X-Prize with the eventual goal of winning transport contracts from NASA. They specialize in low-cost reusable supply modules designed to service the ISS, and they are designing larger vehicles to pre-supply future manned Mars missions.

Global Ecosystems Foundation, an international non-governmental organization

GEF is a Geneva, Switzerland-based think tank with satellite offices in Brazil, Ghana, Washington DC, and Indonesia. The organization's mission is to research and protect the world's most important ecosystems, with a focus on finding ways to help man coexist sustainably.

Gather and develop as much information as you can about its background, history, mission, culture, business and/or products, audience, and competitors. Develop a creative brief that spells out the important details of who they are, what they want, how they can say it, and why it's important. Provide any additional details that will assist in the creative process, and be prepared to present it to the class. *What does your creative team need to know? What have you heard and agreed upon with the client? How do you capture that in written form?*

Next, you will begin the creative process away from your trusty computers and the lure of Adobe Illustrator. *How do you create concepts? What do they look like? How do you present them? Are they abstract, typeset, or illustrative?*

From your final sketch, we will then go to Illustrator and begin working in vectors. We will be working in black and white only. *How will you translate your sketches to line art? How do you bring consistency in line, shape and scale to each logo?*

Next, we select typeface and work out the lockup. *Does your logo include the tagline? Do you create multiple versions for different applications? Do you have a typeface other than Times New Roman?*

Finally we will begin working with color. *Will you use a single color or multiple colors? How do you account for print, web, and other formats?*

Final Deliverables:

Once your logo is finalized, you will set it up for presentation with your color choices, a written rationale, and your creative brief. It should be mounted professionally on black gatorboard or foamcore at 9w" x 12h".

Project 2: Brand Guidebook

So you've got a logo. How do you explain what it stands for? A brand guidebook is a document that clearly defines what the brand is, describes its values, and sets the rules for how it gets used. You're going to be covering all aspects of the brand–not just where the logo goes, but how people talk about it, how it gets used with other elements, and how those elements support the brand's core promise.

To begin, you will develop an outline of your document. *What elements do you need?*

Next, you'll sketch layouts for your guidebook. Again, we're using pencil and paper. Build a grid structure and start plugging content types into it. *What types of content are you designing for? How does your layout adjust to work with different types of content?*

Now you'll work on the content. This means you have to write the content. *What's your brand promise? How do you describe the brand in 15 seconds? One minute? How can you add to the visuals to tell the whole story?*

Then, you'll start building assets for your brand, explaining how they work. *What assets might a liquor distributor need? What type of signage might an engineering firm require? What color polo shirts does a social media firm use?*

Finally, you'll build the guidebook out with all of the elements required. *Does it work with the layouts you sketched? Do you need to alter them to work with your assets? How will you allow for additions and changes to the guidebook?*

Final Deliverables:

Once your guidebook is finalized, you will produce a printed copy and present it to the class. You will find a way to bind it professionally in the size and format of your choice. *I will not accept three-ring binders or wire-bound pages.* Find a way to make this look good, because it should be a portfolio piece.

Project 3: Designing an Identity

We're going to put together all of the things you've learned so far and focus it on a smaller scale, on a personal identity. You're going to develop a business card, letterhead, and website for someone else. You will use the tools and processes you've learned with the first two projects to develop the third.

First, you'll interview your client to find out who they are and what they want to do. *Ask the fundamental questions: Who are they? What are they about? What makes them different and special?*

Next, you'll research their marketplace, competitors, and products/services to develop a creative brief, which should contain the seeds of your concept.

Then you'll use the concepting skills you've learned to sketch out ideas for solutions. You will present and your client will pick one concept.

Following that, you'll focus on executing that concept first in black and white and then in color.

Finally, you'll apply that solution to a business card, letterhead, and mock website. *What will the identity look like in practice? Are you going to show the website at mobile size and what would that look like? What other applications would make sense for your client?*

Final Deliverables:

The business card, letterhead, and website comp will be professionally mounted on black gatorboard or foamcore at 9w" x 12h". If you can't fit it all on one board, consider multiple boards. You will also turn in your final creative brief with the research and synthesis you used to arrive at your solution.

Schedule

See the website listed at the top of the syllabus for the updated schedule. The schedule is subject to change as the project progresses depending on the dynamics of this class and work process. However, this schedule does give you ample time to complete your projects. You are advised to plan ahead but pay attention to any changes that are announced in class or via email.

WEEK 1	
Aug 31	**Initial class:** Introduction to first assignment and course specification. Review of deliverables, explanation of concept and research. **Lecture:** Creative Brief. What is it? Why do I need one?

WEEK 2	
Sep 7	**Presentation:** research and your creative brief. Please organize your research into some form of written document. *How you organize this will help you organize your thoughts later.* **Workshop:** Creative Brief. **Lecture:** Concept. *How do you generate ideas?*

WEEK 3	
Sep 14	**Presentation:** revised creative briefs, part 2 **Critique:** concepts. Have them ready to post on the wall large enough that we can see them. **Working Session:** Sketches to Illustrator
WEEK 4	
Sep 21	**Critique:** Illustrator comps. Again, have them large enough to post on the wall. **Working session:** Color
WEEK 5	
Sep 28	**FINAL LOGO PRESENTATION.** Have your logo printed in color, mounted professionally, with your rationale and creative brief. **Intro to Project 2:** Guidebook **Lecture/Workshop:** Brand and Guidebook. What is a brand? How do you capture all the elements of a brand in one place?
WEEK 6	
Oct 5	**Introduction:** Project 2 outline: Guidebook. *What elements are you going to include? What content are you going to generate? How will you talk about your brand?* **Workshop:** Outlines. *How do you organize your information?* **Working Session:** sketch layouts and grid structures
WEEK 7	
Oct 12	**Critique:** layout sketches. Have them all ready to post on the wall. **Presentation/Workshop:** elevator speeches and brand language. **Working Session:** Content generation
WEEK 8	
Oct 19	**Critique:** Builds and content. Have everything ready to post. **Working Session:** Layouts
WEEK 9	
Oct 26	**Critique:** Guidebook layouts. You should be halfway through your book by now. **Working Session:** Layouts
WEEK 10	
Nov 2	**Critique:** Guidebook layouts **Intro to Project 3:** Identity **Workshop:** Interviewing clients
WEEK 11	
Nov 9	**Presentation:** Research for Project 3 **Final Critique:** Guidebook layouts **Working Session**
WEEK 12	
Nov 16	**FINAL GUIDEBOOK PRESENTATION.** *Have your guidebook printed and bound professionally. No 3-ring binders will be accepted.* **Presentation:** present 3 or more identity concepts with rationale. **Working Session**
WEEK 13	
Nov 23	**NO CLASS. GOBBLE GOBBLE!**
WEEK 14	
Nov 30	**Presentation:** identity comp in B/W **Working Session:** everything. **DEADLINE FOR ANY PROJECT RESUBMISSION**
WEEK 15	
Dec 7	**FINAL CRIT:** Identity

Teaching Philosophy

Graphic Designers are called upon to solve problems on a daily basis. Everything from "Please change the font color" to "The printer says the file is corrupt" to "Come up with 3 new concepts by 4 o'clock". We are communicators, problem solvers, critical thinkers, researchers, technical experts, therapists, and advisors. Developing these skills early will make it easier to find a real job after graduation.

My job is not to tell you what to do, or how to solve a problem, or tell you what your concept should be. I'm here to help guide you to a solution, not show you what it is. I expect everyone to know what a concept is, how to explain it to me and the class, how to execute that concept through type, image, and layout, and then present it. You will be asked to present your final projects to the class, and we'll work on delivery and technique—a fundamental part of the business.

Course Specifics

We meet once a week for four hours, so we're going to cover a lot of ground and the work assignments will be the same as two weekly 2-hour classes. Keep up and work hard.

Instruction will primarily take the form of studio sessions but will also include informal lectures, and group crits.

Of primary importance is the process of creating the solution, and the critical dialogue that accompanies the process. That means you are expected to develop and explain your original concepts, provide informed opinions, offer constructive criticism and defend your work. Weight (both in discussion and grading) will be given to addressing process development and critical evaluation. **If you do not participate in critique, you will most likely drop one letter grade**.

You are expected to come to each class prepared to show your progress. While this is a studio course, you may not necessarily have time to do your work in class. A large amount of class session through the semester will be used for group review.

Final projects must be sent out to a service bureau for output. Students are expected to be familiar with the basics of InDesign, Illustrator (beziér curves) and Photoshop (layers) as well as with collecting for output, gathering fonts, etc.

Your presentation materials (comps) will be prepared in a professional manner. That means careful trimming and mounting. This is important to your final grade.

Printed and bound projects are due at the end of the semester. You are expected to turn in two copies. One copy will be kept as part of course archive. I will also ask for a PDF file of each of your projects. NOTE: *These PDF files do not count as your final projects.*

Lost or corrupt files and/or the inability to print will not excuse you from deadlines or crits.

You are in college, and InDesign has a spellcheck function.

If I see misspelled words in your final projects, I will mark them down. **If I see misspelled words in a final project, I'll mark you down a full letter grade**.

Attendance

Absolutely mandatory: If a student misses three unexcused classes the final grade will be lowered one full letter grade (i.e., if you have a grade of a B at the end of the term and you have missed three classes, your final grade will be a C). If you miss six classes, the final grade will be dropped two letter grades, and so on. *If you miss more than three classes, excused or otherwise, I will advise you to drop or withdraw from the course.*

I will have a sign-in sheet on a desk at the beginning of each class. If you don't sign it, you will be counted as absent. If you arrive 15 minutes after class begins you will be counted as absent. (Likewise, if you leave early, you will be counted as absent.) If you miss information due to absence it is your responsibility to obtain the missed information from your classmates (no exception). You are expected to come to next class prepared to show your work.

You are expected to come to class on time prepared to show your work for a critique. I will note every time a student presents the same work as on previous class without any further progress. This will affect your final grade especially if it is a pattern.

There will be no incomplete given at the end of the term unless the student can verify his/her personal situation with medical documentation. Even then, 90% of the work has to have been completed. Incomplete is given only to those who are unable to complete the work due to unforeseen circumstances such as serious surgery etc. Please refer to university policy on incompletes.

I work in Washington, D.C. and take the train home. If, in the event my train is delayed, I can't make class on time, I'll notify the class via email as soon as I'm aware of the delay, and notify the design department.

Email Communication

On the first day of class you are asked to send me an email contact you check regularly along with the section of Art 431 you are registered for. I will use it to create a class roster. This roster is the one I'll use to contact you all on a regular basis. If you don't send me your contact information, the burden is on you to get the information from your classmates.

Office Hours:

I don't keep office hours. I'm an adjunct, which means class time is your time to talk to me (see the attendance policy above). I don't critique via email. If you have a question during the week, by all means ask me, and I'll get back to you. But don't expect me to send you a 20-minute review in email format.

I will not answer class-related email 24 hours before the next class. If you send me an email asking about the assignment at 9PM the night before it's due, you're obviously taking this seriously.

Grading:

You're senior-level design students. I look at the class from a professional point of view: If you don't deliver your work on time, you're fired. Worse, you don't get paid. Find a way to make things happen.

I grade on three main points during each project: **Participation, Concept,** and **Design**. These grades lead to your final grade for each project. They are non-negotiable. Please see the sample grading sheet for an idea of how I determine grades. The scale is as follows: A: 4.5–5; B: 4.49–4; C: 3.9–3.5; D: 3.49–3; F: anything below 2.9.

Participation (30%) is how much you contribute to each class on a regular basis. Each critique is your chance to ask questions, offer feedback, and interact with your fellow students. The more you learn how to do this constructively, the more you will learn. *Can you give and receive constructive criticism? Did you do your research?*

Concept (40%) is about the thinking behind each of your projects. *What is the idea you're basing the design upon? How strong is it? Are you willing to alter or change your concept if a newer, stronger one presents itself? How much research have you done, and how well is it organized? Does it support your concept?*

Design (30%) is the logical product of your concepts. If you don't start with a strong concept, you're just moving elements around the page. Everything has a purpose, and should serve the concept. Anything else is decoration. *What is your process? Have you sketched anything? Have your sketches iterated through multiple ideas? Have you fulfilled the purpose of the assignment?*

Design is also about how much time and effort you put into the physical manifestation of your projects. *Are they covered in glue? Are the edges torn? Is the printing perfect? Did you try several approaches to the final mockup, or go with the first one you built? How difficult was your approach?*

Projects are what you present to me and to the class. You will be given a grade on each completed project and your presentation. Semi final and final crits are absolutely mandatory attendance. Missing class on those days will be considered the same as missing an exam.

Stated deadlines must be met. Assignments will not be accepted if they are late. You're better off turning work in incomplete for a lowered grade than not turning it in on the due date. You'll get an F for the project if your work isn't turned in on the due date, and I won't accept a resubmission. This is not negotiable.

Lost or corrupt computer files and/or the inability to print will not excuse you from crits or deadlines. Always back up all your work. You are also advised to allow at least three days

for production before final crit and give yourself some extra time in case you have any technological break down. Not attending a final or semi final crit, even if you do not have your work completed, will result in an F for the project.

PROJECT RESUBMISSIONS: If you are unhappy with the grade you received after the first submission, I will take resubmissions as many times as you'd like up until November 30. I'm happy to walk you through pencil sketches first so that you don't potentially waste time building out ideas in Illustrator. Take advantage of this—not only to improve your letter grade but for your edification as a designer.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibility of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of dishonesty, and they are wrong. Misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal. To read the full Student Academic Conduct Policy, consult the UMBC Student Handbook or the Academic Integrity section of the UMBC website. Any level of plagiarism is not acceptable. **Students presenting work that is not their original concept and execution will receive an automatic F for the class, and I will report them to the Undergraduate Academic Conduct Committee**.

Because this is a studio course and you are all expected to present your process and final work, sometimes instructor can see when a student is being heavily influenced by another students' work. In case by case, instructor will reserve the right to judge when this happens and help the student who is picking up idea and stylistic direction from another student to redirect and find his or her visual language.

Behavior

Students are expected to treat each other and the professor with respect and courtesy. In addition please make note of the following:

All cellphones have to be turned off.

No iPod or any other music gadget attached to your ears: no exceptions.

If I find you checking their email, posting to Facebook, working on other class projects, surfing the net for anything other than for class work, I'll ask you to leave the classroom. No exceptions will be made.

You are expected to do all of your research outside of the class time. Class time is reserved for studio work or reviews. Research during class is allowed if part of the class session or if I specifically request students to do so during class—normally a rare occurrence for this course.

Other Dates to Note:

Thurs. Sept. 08: Visiting Artist talk by Paul Rucker
 (location will be confirmed by next week) @ 5PM

Tues. Sept. 13: Visiting Artist talk by Guillermo Gomez-Pena
PAHB Theater @ 7PM

Mon. Sept. 19: The Future of the Arts at UMBC - a talk by
David Yager
Linehan Concert Hall @ 5PM (participate in an essay
competition and win a cash award (deposited to your
student account) -- details coming soon!)

Wed. Sept. 28: Talk by Entrepreneurial Teaching Artist -
Jamaal Collier
UC 312 @ 12:00 PM

Thurs. Sept. 29: CADVC - Opening Reception
Revolution of the Eye. Modern Art & the Birth of American
Television - 5PM

Fri. Oct. 28: ART BUS TRIP - Visit art museums and artists'
studios in NYC!!
7:00 AM - 10:00 PM (registration details coming soon!)

Thurs. Nov. 17: Visiting Media Theorist talk by Lynn Spigel
PAHB Room 132 @ 4 PM

Participation

1	2	3	4	**5**	Did you come with your work completed and ready to show?
1	2	**3**	4	5	Did you give and receive constructive criticism from the instructor and your classmates?
1	2	3	4	**5**	Did your work reflect the feedback from critique and class discussion?
1	2	3	**4**	5	Are you able to present your work in a clear, professional, and informed manner?

Concept

1	2	3	4	**5**	Are your concepts original, well considered, and executed professionally?
1	2	3	4	**5**	Did you do enough research and preparation to support your concepts?
1	2	3	**4**	5	Did you explore alternative solutions, concepts, or methods during the course of the project?
1	2	3	**4**	5	Were you able to clearly explain and defend your solutions to the class in critique?
1	2	3	4	**5**	Are your conceptual solutions successful?

Design

1	2	3	**4**	5	Does your design successfully support the story that you are telling?
1	2	3	**4**	5	Does your solution have an authentic visual voice?
1	2	3	**4**	5	Are all of your color choices carefully researched, considered and applied? Do they complement your subject matter?
1	2	**3**	4	5	Did you explore unique ways of organizing and displaying your layouts? Does the grid structure work with all of your elements?
1	2	3	**4**	5	Is your project constructed and presented in a professional manner with attention to craft?

Project 2 Grade: B

Notes

John, you put a lot of time into your project and it turned out really well. Your concept was really strong from the beginning, and after you started thinking in terms of grid and final size, I think everything came together for your piece. I still think you could push it further.

Looking above, you'll see what we talked about in class—speak up more in critique. Work on your presentation. You did improve in the second half of the semester, but you can get better. More work on your typography (taking paragraphs out of those boxes) would have helped, as well as pushing the color further. Don't be afraid to take elements away. What happens if you remove the boxes behind all of the elements completely? You've got a solid grid anchoring everything. One thing I forgot to mention in the crit was centering your type—try to avoid doing this throughout if at all possible. As a rule, if you've got more than 3-4 words per line and more than 3 lines, justify left and rag it right. It's much easier to read and better typography in general.

I bumped your grade up for the work you did on the icons as well. Evening out the linework and the adjustments you made really tighten up the set. Nice work!