

AD 490: The Design of Branding

Course Info

Instructor: Justin Countee — Email: justin.countee@njit.edu

Section: 001

Meeting Times / Location: Tue, Fri; 1:00pm-2:20pm, Weston Hall Lecture Room 2

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: DD 264 or ID 264 or INT 264 or ARCH 363.

Restrictions: For Digital Design, Industrial Design, and Interior Design majors only; other majors require department approval to register.

Course Description

This 15-week elective introduces students to the intersection of branding and motion design, providing both conceptual frameworks and hands-on practice. Students will explore the essential elements of brand identity—logos, color, typography, and composition—and learn how these visual systems can be extended into motion. Emphasis will be placed on developing a consistent and cohesive visual language, one that not only reflects the values of a brand but also enhances audience engagement through dynamic storytelling. Case studies of successful brand campaigns will be analyzed to highlight how design decisions influence perception and communication in contemporary media.

Equally important to the course is the acquisition of technical ability in Adobe After Effects. Students will progressively build skills in keyframing, transitions, effects, typography animation, motion paths, sound integration, and 3D space. Assignments and projects are designed to simulate professional workflows, moving from concept development to branded social media ads and culminating in a motion design supported brand campaign. By balancing creative exploration with production discipline, students will gain the ability to design, animate, and present motion graphics, preparing them for further coursework or entry-level industry opportunities.

Course Objectives

By the course end, students will:

- Understand branding fundamentals and apply them through motion graphics
- Gain proficiency in After Effects' workflow (interface, layers, animation tools)
- Animate brand identity elements (logo, typography, color)
- Apply sound design and motion design best practices
- Learn file organization, backup strategies, and export formats
- Present work professionally, incorporating feedback into refinement

Course Materials & Resources

- Required: Adobe After Effects, Adobe Photoshop, ; access via NJIT labs or personal license
- Required Textbook (available to purchase as a hardcover, or access it online via The NJIT Littman Library; <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/njit/detail.action?docID=7104518>):
 - Wheeler, Alina. *Designing Brand Identity: An Essential Guide for the Whole Branding Team*. 5th ed., Wiley, 2017.
- Readings: Other articles or readings may be assigned at instructor's discretion
- Lab access: We do not have lab time during class. Please use the Weston Hall lab outside of class hours when needed. Visit the front administration desk in Weston Hall for this semester's lab schedule.

Assignment & Submission Guidelines

- Homework and projects are due at the start of class.
- Late submissions are penalized one letter grade per class late
- Keep regular backups of all work; lost files won't justify extensions. I'd suggest using a plug-in hard drive, your personal Google Drive, or high capacity USB stick in addition to your personal laptop's storage.

Grading & Evaluation

Assignments/Quizzes/Homework – 15%

Project 1 (Animated Brand Logo) – 20%

Project 2 (Brand Story Animation) – 25%

Project 3 (Branded Motion Campaign) – 30%

Participation & Attendance – 10%

Total: 100%

Kepler Requirement

Project grading is not officially applied to student standing until project deliverables have been uploaded in the proper format to the Kepler system. **Failure to upload work to Kepler will result in an F for the course.**

Evaluation Criteria

- Technical proficiency and craftsmanship
- Creativity, concept development, independent thinking

- Professionalism in presentation and critiques
- Effort and engagement beyond minimum requirements

Academic Warning

Students who do not complete and submit assignments on time and to a satisfactory standard will fail the class. It is the student's responsibility to obtain missed assignments from other classmates and make up work in time for the next class.

Extra Credit

There is no extra credit for this course.

Attendance & Participation Policy

- Attendance recorded each session; after three unexcused absences, each additional absence reduces final grade by half a letter
- Tardiness (arriving/leaving 15+ minutes late/early or extended breaks) counts: three tardies equals one absence
- Excused absences require documentation to Dean of Students within 14 days
- Notify instructor early if absence is due to religious observance or NJIT-sponsored events

Course Policies

- No food or drink in lab; respect shared facilities and lab codes
- Cell phones, social media, music playback devices must be off during class
- NJIT email and Canvas are official communication channels; check regularly

Course Communication

Students are expected to check their NJIT email for course announcements and updates. Students and Instructors are expected to use their NJIT email for course communication.

Instructor may make use of Canvas Announcements to send out important messages for the class, which students can set up to automatically receive an email forward.

Students are expected to check these platforms for course updates.

Weekly Course Schedule (Subject to Change)

- **Weeks 1–5:** Branding foundations; After Effects fundamentals, typography, color
- **Quiz 1**
- **Week 6–7:** Motion paths, transitions; Project 1 due end of Week 7
- **Weeks 8–10:** Animated assets, sound, advanced animation techniques; Project 2 due end of Week 11
- **Quiz 2**
- **Weeks 11–13:** Social media motion design, 3D elements, exporting
- **Weeks 14–15:** Portfolio critique, final project presentations (Project 3 due end of Week 15)

Academic Integrity & Ethics

- All work must be original. Any plagiarism or cheating will result in disciplinary action as per NJIT policy

Accommodations

- Students with documented disabilities should notify the instructor by the second week for accommodations to be arranged

Support Resources

- Health & Wellness: <https://www.njit.edu/healthservices/>
- Mental Health: <https://researchguides.njit.edu/mentalhealth>