

CMGT 544

Creating Differentiation for Organizations: Meaning and Growth

(aka Communicating Branding)

4.0 Units



**Spring 2025 - Tuesday - 6.30-9.20 PM**

**Section: 21757D**

**Location: ANN 309**

**Instructor: Simon Uwins**

**Office: Online**

**Office Hours: Tuesday 5.00 PM, and by appointment**

**Contact Info: [simon.uwins@mac.com](mailto:simon.uwins@mac.com)**

## Course Description

Brands are more important than ever. In an environment of hyper-competition, fragmented consumer attention, and increased uncertainty, strong brands deliver better performance and higher valuations.

Not surprisingly, branding has evolved from little more than designing a logo into its own complex discipline - a discipline increasingly informed by the Behavioral Sciences.

This course examines how strong brands can be built in today's connected world. You will learn:

- 1) How branding works by creating positive shared associations in our memories, and the challenges of doing that in today's environment.
- 2) Why brands are increasingly defined by experience and word of mouth rather than advertising.
- 3) How to create a distinct and meaningful brand positioning, by combining values, culture, products, and experience with goals people want to achieve.
- 4) How to engage people in the brand, to create shared meaning and growth.
- 5) Why habit is a marketer's best friend (and greatest enemy).

You will become familiar with a set of vocabulary, concepts, and frameworks, and with relying on them to assess brands and develop strategies. You will gain perspective on how the discipline of branding is changing in today's digitally connected world. And since branding is a collaborative process, you will frequently work in teams, learning to share insights and expertise to achieve better outcomes.

## Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Assess and analyze the strength and positioning of brands in the competitive space.
- Develop brand strategies to build brands that matter to people in today's connected world.
- Develop marketing strategies to engage people and create shared meaning and growth.
- Apply key branding concepts to real branding situations.
- Evaluate materials from popular, professional, and academic sources related to branding, and tell the underlying stories that together they reveal.

## Course Notes

This course is based on the Flipped classroom model, with a weekly class centered around discussion and group exercise rather than lectures. Students will need to complete the pre-learning each week detailed on Brightspace and be prepared to participate in class.

## Required Readings

Sharp, B. (2010) *How Brands Grow: What marketers don't know*. Oxford University Press. The revised and expanded eBook version (2014) is recommended, available exclusively on Apple Books.

[Apple Books](#)

Barden, P. (2022). *Decoded: The Science Behind Why We Buy*. Wiley, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

[Amazon](#)

Collins, M. (2023). *For The Culture: The power behind what we buy, what we do, and who we want to be*. PublicAffairs.

[Amazon](#)

Additional readings and videos will be specified in the relevant week's file on Brightspace.

## Class Assignments

### Brief Branding Presentation

The brief branding presentation is to be done by the student individually.

The presentation's purpose is for you to create a class discussion around a real branding situation. The presentation can be about a brand, or about a branding-related idea, problem, or argument.

2 students will present each week, during the beginning of class. Each oral presentation lasts no more than 5 minutes. The time limit will be strictly imposed.

The instructor will coordinate and assign a specific week for you.

For details, please review the document "CMGT 544 Brief Brand Presentation Specifications," on Brightspace, under the link "Core Assignments".

### Brand Mapping Assignment

The brand mapping assignment is to be completed by each student individually.

The assignment will enable you to assess and analyze the strength and positioning of brands in the competitive space.

The assignment involves:

- Selecting a consumer-facing market that you are interested in.
- Analyzing consumer perceptions of each brand in the market.
- Creating and submitting a perceptual map of the brands in the market.
- Evaluating the positioning of each brand in the market.
- Creating and submitting a positioning map of the brands in the market.

For details, please review the document “CMGT 544 Brand Mapping Assignment Specifications” on Brightspace, under the link “Core Assignments”.

Major Project

The course’s major project is working in teams of 2, to create a potential brand for a market from the Brand Mapping Assignment.

You will develop strategies to position the brand so that it matters to people, applying relevant branding concepts. And you will develop marketing strategies to engage people in the brand, to create shared meaning and sales growth.

Your strategies will be detailed in two papers:

- Brand Strategy.
- Marketing Strategy.

You will present the proposed brand to the class at the end of the semester.

For details, please review the document “CMGT 544 Major Project Specifications” on Brightspace under the link “Core Assignments”.

Participation in Class Discussion

Each student is expected to contribute to the learning in this class. In most class sessions, you must speak, ask questions, and argue respectfully. You must also collaborate in teams.

To do so, you must prepare well:

- Complete the pre-learning each week on Brightspace.
- Read, view, or listen to other relevant and interesting content.
- Reflect on your key takeaways.

Judgment of participation is based on the instructors’ aggregate impressions gained throughout the semester. If you participate frequently and enthusiastically in class, and complete the weekly Brightspace pre-learning, you will earn a strong score. You will not earn a strong score by merely attending class.

If you are unable to attend a class, you will need to complete the pre-learning and email your key takeaways to the instructor, to earn a strong score.

If you are absent without permission, disengaged, or disrespectful, you will earn zero.

## Grading

### Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
<b>Brief Branding Presentation</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Participation in Class Discussion</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Brand Mapping Assignment</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Major Project</b>	<b>70%</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

### Grading Scale

Each assignment will be worth 100 points and will be converted to a percentage score depending upon the weight assigned to each. Your percentage scores from the assignments will be totaled and translated to a letter grade per the scale shown below:

Letter grade and corresponding numerical point range		
94% to 100%: A	80% to 82.9%: B-	67% to 69.9%: D+
90% to 93.9%: A- (A minus)	77% to 79.9%: C+	63% to 66.9%: D
87% to 89.9%: B+	73% to 76.9%: C	60% to 62.9%: D-
83% to 86.9%: B	70% to 72.9%: C- (C minus)	0% to 59.9%: F

### Grading Standards

Grades will be assigned as follows:

- A/A- outstanding, thoughtful, and enthusiastic work.
- B+/B above average work, demonstrating good insight and understanding.
- B-/C+ satisfactory work, needs improvement on ideas, argument and follow through.
- C and below fulfilling the bare minimum and showing little understanding of the material.

Grading Timeline

Assignments will usually be graded and returned within two weeks.

Assignment Submission Policy

**All assignments need to be completed and handed in on time to avoid a grade reduction. If you are unable to turn in an assignment due to illness or a personal emergency, you must discuss your situation with me in a timely manner. Do not wait until the end of the semester to sort things out.**

To pass this course, you will need to complete ALL the assignments. Failure to complete one or more of them will result in an F in the class.

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

A weekly schedule of the topics, readings, and deliverables for the course. Detailed content and instructions for each week will be specified on Brightspace under relevant Week's link.

***Important note to students:*** Be advised that this syllabus is subject to change - and probably will change - based on the progress of the class, news events, and/or guest speaker availability

	Key Topics/Activities	Core Readings	Deliverable/Due Dates
Week 1 Date: 1/14	<b>Introduction</b>  <b>What is Branding?</b>	Course Syllabus	
Week 2 Date: 1/21	<b>What is a Strong Brand?</b>	Book: <i>How Brands Grow</i> , chapter 12	
Week 3 Date: 1/28	<b>Building a Brand Today</b>		
Week 4 Date: 2/4	<b>A Brand with a View</b>	White Paper: <i>The New Brand Culture Model</i>	
Week 5 Date: 2/11	<b>Creating Value for Customers</b>	Book: <i>Decoded</i>	Brand Mapping Assignment: Perceptual Map (2/10, 5.30pm)
Week 6 Date: 2/18	<b>Standing Out from the Crowd</b>	Book: <i>How Brands Grow</i> , chapter 8	

Week 7 Date: 2/25	<b>Project Workshop: Brand Strategy</b>		Brand Mapping Assignment: Positioning Map (2/24, 5.30pm)
Week 8 Date: 3/4	<b>Rules of Customer Engagement</b>	Book: <i>For the Culture</i>	
Week 9 Date: 3/11	<b>The Rise of Brand Storytelling</b>		
Week 10 Date: 3/25	<b>Content and Community</b>		Major Project: Brand Strategy (3/24, 5.30pm)
Week 11 Date: 4/1	<b>Project Workshop: Marketing Strategy</b>		
Week 12 Date: 4/8	<b>Cultivating the Habit of Loyalty</b>		
Week 13 Date: 4/15	<b>Finding Customer Insights</b>	Guest Speaker	Major Project: Marketing Strategy (4/14, 5.30pm)
Week 14 Date: 4/22	<b>Why Brands Fail?</b>	Video: <i>How Will You Measure Your Life?</i>	
Week 15 Date: 4/29	<b>Major Project: Presentations</b>  <b>Consolidation of Learning</b>		
Week 16 Date: 5/6	No class meeting		Major Project: Revised Papers (5/7, 5.30pm)  Major Project: Peer Evaluation (5/9, 5.30pm)

## Policies and Procedures

### Attendance

Graduate school is in many ways a preparation or refinement for successful professional lives. Professional success depends on a range of skills and behaviors, but one foundational behavior is showing up, on time, prepared, and alert.

So, complete the week's pre-learning on Brightspace. Come to class, on time. When you are here, be here. If you are unable to attend class, complete the week's pre-learning on Brightspace and submit your key takeaways.

Being absent (i.e., not attending class, or not submitting your key takeaways from the pre-learning if unable to attend) will accumulate penalties. You are allowed one absence without penalty. Thereafter, each **unexcused** absence costs 2% of the total grade. Being absent from more than three classes opens the possibility for more stringent penalties (e.g., the highest grade to be earned is a C).

#### Class Etiquette

Be respectful of each other. We're all in this together. While you may at times disagree, exposure to other people's opinions is all part of the learning experience.

Be courteous. Don't interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.

Consider anything said in class strictly confidential. We want to create an atmosphere for open, honest exchange.

Please do not eat while class is in session, it is disrespectful. A 15-minute break will be provided each week.

#### Use of Generative AI

The use of AI (ChatGPT, Claude, etc) is allowed in this class, as they can be useful tools.

Keep in mind the following:

- AI tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- Do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy. Every fact, number, or source provided needs to be verified. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you already understand.
- To adhere to our university values, you must cite any AI-generated material included and provide the prompts used to generate the content. Failure to do so is a violation of academic integrity policies.

#### Communication

Office hours are available Tuesday 5.00-6.20pm, please book an appointment via email (simon.uwins@mac.com).

If you cannot attend these hours, please email to set up an alternative meeting time. All emails will be replied within 48 hours.



## Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

### Academic Integrity

The University of Southern California is foremost a learning community committed to fostering successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. Academic misconduct is in contrast to the university's mission to educate students through a broad array of first-rank academic, professional, and extracurricular programs and includes any act of dishonesty in the submission of academic work (either in draft or final form).

This course will follow the expectations for academic integrity as stated in the [USC Student Handbook](#). All students are expected to submit assignments that are original work and prepared specifically for the course/section in this academic term. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s). Students suspected of engaging in academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Other violations of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

Academic dishonesty has a far-reaching impact and is considered a serious offense against the university. Violations will result in a grade penalty, such as a failing grade on the assignment or in the course, and disciplinary action from the university itself, such as suspension or even expulsion.

For more information about academic integrity see the [student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### Course Content Distribution and Synchronous Session Recordings Policies

USC has policies that prohibit recording and distribution of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment.

Recording a university class without the express permission of the instructor and announcement to the class, or unless conducted pursuant to an Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) accommodation, is prohibited. Recording can inhibit free discussion in the future, and thus infringe on the academic freedom of other students as well as the instructor. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

Distribution or use of notes, recordings, exams, or other intellectual property, based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study. This includes but is not limited to providing materials for distribution by services publishing course materials. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relation to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media. Distributing course material without the instructor's permission will be presumed to be an intentional act to facilitate or enable academic dishonesty and is strictly prohibited. ([Living our Unifying Values: The USC Student Handbook](#), page 13).

#### Students and Disability Accommodations

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](https://osas.usc.edu). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

#### Student Financial Aid and Satisfactory Academic Progress

To be eligible for certain kinds of financial aid, students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) toward their degree objectives. Visit the [Financial Aid Office webpage](#) for [undergraduate](#)- and [graduate-level](#) SAP eligibility requirements and the appeals process.

#### Support Systems

##### [Annenberg Student Success Fund](#)

The Annenberg Student Success Fund is a donor-funded financial aid account available to USC Annenberg undergraduate and graduate students for non-tuition expenses related to extra- and co-curricular programs and opportunities.

##### [Annenberg Student Emergency Aid Fund](#)

Awards are distributed to students experiencing unforeseen circumstances and emergencies impacting their ability to pay tuition or cover everyday living expenses. These awards are not intended to cover full-tuition expenses, but rather serve as bridge funding to guarantee students' continued enrollment at USC until other resources, such as scholarships or loans, become available. Students are encouraged to provide as much information in their

application, as well as contact their academic advisor directly with questions about additional resources available to them.

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention.

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline consists of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-2500

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.

[TrojansAlert](#)

TrojansAlert is an alert system that allows university officials to contact you during an emergency. It is your connection to real-time updates, instructions on where to go, what to do, or what not to do, who to contact and other important information. Visit the website to sign up.

*Emergency Preparedness/Course Continuity in a Crisis*

In case of a declared emergency if travel to campus is not feasible, USC executive leadership will announce an electronic way for instructors to teach students in their residence halls or homes using a combination of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technologies. See the university's site on [Campus Safety and Emergency Preparedness](#).

[ITS Customer Support Center](#) (CSC): (213) 740-5555

The ITS Customer Support Center (CSC) provides support to the USC community for connecting to the USC Network and using supported applications. For help with network connectivity and software, contact CSC. Walk-in support is available in Leavey Library's Information Commons.

[Violence-Free Campus](#)

Visit the website to read more about prohibited behaviors, reporting responsibilities and where to report.

*Student-Athlete Travel Excuse Letters*

Prior to a university-sponsored away competition, Student-Athletes are responsible for providing their Instructor with a Competition Excuse Letter (provided by their academic counselor) for the classes missed while on the road (i.e., excused absence). It is the responsibility of the Student-Athlete to provide the letter prior to leaving on their trip and to make arrangements for a make-up of any missed assignments or exams. Please refer to the [SAAS site](#) where they detail travel and travel excuse letters.

