USCAnnenberg

DSM 599 Brand Strategy for Digital Media 4 Units

"A brand is no longer what we tell the consumer it is — it is what consumers tell each other it is."

- Scott Cook, Founder - Intuit

Spring 2025 – Tuesday, 2:00PM – 4:50PM Section: 21892D Location: ASC 331 Instructor: Jeffrey Hirsch Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:00AM-1:30PM or by appointment Contact Info: hirschj@usc.edu, 818-400-7922

I. Course Description

The ability to create and analyze branding strategy is essential for all communication professionals. While some branding principles are timeless, the art and science of bringing those principles to life has changed significantly in the recent past. Digital spending has soared to over 50% of the marketing mix in the past ten years.

This, by its very nature, changes the dynamics of the branding process. "Image-building," slow-build media such as network television may be alive and well, but have been supplemented and in some cases replaced by digital communications that are significantly different in nature. Successful brands must now strive to meet their customers where they are. Rather than "talking to" them through "interruptive" technologies like TV ads, brands aim to engage customers through dialog, presenting a steady flow of strategically focused opportunities to engage online and offline.

These communications must be more than tactical to succeed. Digital interactions must not only fit seamlessly into the lives of customers, they need to be conceived and executed in a manner that crafts brand imagery and builds differentiation as well. This course will explore branding in a context that recognizes the growing importance of digital media in the communications mix.

Students will learn how to evaluate existing brand positions and to create proprietary, compelling brand positions on their own. Equally important, students will understand branding in the context of the ROI-driven, more short-term oriented digital-media world.

II. Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Assess and analyze the state of a brand, in terms of its origin, its philosophy and stance, its position in the competitive space.
- Apply key branding concepts to real branding cases, including how to position themselves (personal branding).
- Write effective creative briefs to guide communication plans and all executions, including brand values, purpose, differentiation and personality.
- Understand branding challenges in the context of divided society and the ability of digital media to focus on highly segmented targets.
- Create campaigns to improve outcomes for the brands with an emphasis on the role of branding in digital media.

III. Course Notes

Classes are centered around reading, exercises and projects and lectures.

For each unit of in-class contact time, the university expects 2 hours of out-of-class student work; consequently, prepare to invest at least 8 hours per week outside of class into course-related work.

IV. Description and Assessment of Assignments

"This Week in Branding" (A component of Class Participation)

Each week, students must read at least one article about branding, and be prepared to lead a class discussion on the topic. Sources may include major newspapers (New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Washington Post, Wall Street Journal, e.g.), magazines/websites (Bloomberg News, e.g.), trade publications (Adweek, Ad Age, The Drum, e.g.) or other publications.

Digital Success Story (15%)

The purpose of this assignment is to build awareness and understanding of how digital media is shaping brand perceptions.

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The Digital Success Story presentation is to be done by each student individually. You will conduct secondary research to identify a successful brand initiative that primarily leveraged digital marketing tools. The presentations should include the brand's objectives for the program (what was it trying to accomplish or change), the details of plan (the role each marketing element played in that success), an analysis on the overall impact on the brand image and what, if anything about the program could be improved.

One or two students will present each week, during the beginning of class. Each oral presentation is to last no more than 10 minutes. The time limit will be strictly imposed. There will be an additional 10 minutes allotted for questions and discussion.

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

BrandScript (15%)

Using the format presented in the book *Building a Story Brand*, students will create a seven-part outline that tells the story of a brand to be selected from a list provided by the professor.

Brand Analysis & Vision (25%)

A team project in two parts:

- Summary and analysis of a selected brand's history, current state of the brand and competitive environment (10%)
- A presentation that provides a vision for the brand's future with an emphasis on leveraging digital marketing tools to bring the brand strategy to life. (15%)

Personal Branding Project Creative Brief (20%)

The Personal Branding Project will challenge students to leverage learning from class lectures, discussions, and readings to develop a detailed creative brief for their own brand.

Personal Branding Plan (15%)

Based on the creative brief, students will develop a rudimentary marketing plan – including digital & traditional tools - to bring their personal brands to life.

(For detailed descriptions, see "Project Specifications") **V. Grading**

a. Breakdown of Grade

Assignment	% of Grade
Digital Success Story	15%
BrandScript	15%
 Team Brand Analysis & Vision – Part 1 Presentations of brand history; descriptions of relevant branding concepts that explain brand's success and/or failure Description of brand's current state and environment; 	10%
application of relevant branding concepts to diagnose weaknesses and explore possibilities	
 Team Brand Analysis & Vision – Part 2 Presentation 	15%
 Personal Branding Project Creative brief, detailing Fundamental Human Value, Brand Principle, Positioning & Personality 	20%
 Personal Branding Project Marketing Plan 	15%
 Class Participation General discussion/readings This Week in Marketing Questions & responses to classmates individual branding presentations and final team presentations Summative Class Experience 	10%
Total:	100%

b. Grading Scale

94% to 100%: A	80% to 83%: B-	67% to 69%: D+
90% to 93%: A-	77% to 79%: C+	64% to 66%: D
87% to 89%: B+	74% to 76%: C	60% to 63%: D-
84% to 86%: B	70% to 73%: C-	0% to 59%: F

c. Grading Standards

The quality of thinking reflected in your assignments is the most important factor in grading. The following rubric offers basic guidelines.

Key Performance Measure	Description	% of Grade
Originality, Creativity and Strategic Focus	Your work should aspire to be original, creative and on strategy. Papers and presentations must transcend the obvious and demonstrate depth. Recommendations must always be appropriate for the brand, i.e., fit seamlessly with brand values, positioning, and personality.	50%
Storytelling	Presentations must tell a story, with a reader/audience friendly, engaging, and logical flow. This includes both the precise language you leverage to express your ideas as well as the visuals.	20%
Appropriate Citations	Work must be supported by facts with appropriate citations.	10%
Realistic Recommendations	Recommendations must be realistic and not blue- sky fantasies. One must reasonably assume that your ideas for campaigns can be implemented in real life, i.e., you must leverage <u>existing</u> technology and support your plans with reasonable budgets using guidelines from brand history.	10%
Sound Grammar/Typo Free	 Sound grammar and cleanly constructed sentences and paragraphs are essential. Presentations and papers must be free of typos. Typos that have been flagged for autocorrect are especially egregious. Any more than 3 typos will result in no credit for this segment, i.e., you will lose 5% of your grade off the top. NOTE: If English is your second language, or you feel that your writing needs improvement for any reason, please be sure to review all assignments with a USC writing coach. 	
	TOTAL	100 %

• A's will be the exception and must be earned. Only high-quality, near professional or professional work will receive an A.

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- B's will be given for work that demonstrates thought, initiative and creativity.
- C's are for those who "phone in the work" or "just get by."
- D's are barely passing grades for undergrads and essentially F's for graduate students. For those who put a minimum of thought and effort into your work.
- F's are for turning in work more than 3 days late, work that does not address project guidelines, thoughtless work that reflects virtually no effort, or

d. Grading Timeline

You will receive detailed feedback on all assignments. Most often, you will receive your grade within one week of handing in your work.

VI. Assignment Rubrics

- See Project Specifications for details on all assignments.
- See "Course Schedule: Weekly Breakdown" below for due dates.

VII. Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments will be emailed to the Professor *no later than 11:59 PM on the designated due date.*

Even one minute late will incur a penalty. Grades will be reduced by one entire grade (A becomes a B) for the first day the assignment is late, and another full grade on day two (What was originally an A is now a C.) If not submitted by the third day an F will be automatically issued. For team projects, each member of the team will be penalized equally.

Please use Word or PowerPoint documents whenever possible. Files should be named in the following format:

- Individual Assignment: Last name, first name, Assignment
- Team Assignment: Team Name, Assignment

VIII. Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

The following books are required:

Moon, Y. (2010). Different: Escaping the competitive herd. New York, NY: Crown

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> Business. http://www.amazon.com/Different-Escaping-Competitive-Youngme-Moon/dp/030746086X/

Miller, D. (2017). *Building A Brand Story.* New York, NY: HarperCollins. <u>https://www.amazon.com/Building-StoryBrand-Clarify-Message-</u> <u>Customers/dp/0718033329</u>

Thompson, D. (2017). *Hit Makers: How to Succeed in an Age of Distraction*, New York NY: Penguin Press. <u>https://smile.amazon.com/Hit-Makers-Derek-Thompson-audiobook/dp/B01MY19JXP/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=hitmakers&qid=159</u> 7010149&sr=8-1

You are required to watch the following videos:

"Long Strange Trip," Episode 5, "Dead Heads," (Amazon Video)

"The Inventor: Out for Blood in Silicon Valley" (HBO/Amazon Prime)

"Sour Grapes (Netflix)

• **Note:** Videos should be available free or for rental/purchase on Amazon Prime Video. Contact instructor with any problems regarding access.

In addition, you will be required to read several articles. See the course's weekly breakdown that follows for details.

Other Reading:

Successful marketers must be in sync with the popular culture and the world around them. Most possess an insatiable curiosity, fueled, in part, by a wide range of reading.

Readings in addition to the required books will be assigned before each class. Students are also strongly encouraged to *read on a daily basis*, including:

- Newspapers on a daily basis, particularly the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.
- Non-business-related magazines and blogs: The New Yorker, The Atlantic, Salon, Slate, Vanity Fair, Rolling Stone, etc.
- Business related magazines and blogs: Ad Age, Adweek, Forbes, Harvard Business Review, LinkedIn (The everyday feed and "Pulse" sections offer a wide range of blogs by "Influencers" and other marketing professionals).

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- Non-business books: Novels, history, biographies, and other non-fiction.
- And, most important, whatever interests you.

IX. Laptop Policy

All undergraduate and graduate Annenberg majors and minors are required to have a PC or Apple laptop that can be used in Annenberg classes. Please refer to the **Annenberg Digital Lounge** for more information. To connect to USC's Secure Wireless network, please visit USC's **Information Technology Services** website.

X. Add/Drop Dates for Session

First day of classes: Monday, January 13, 2025

Last day to add: Friday, January 31, 2025

Last day to change to Pass/No Pass: Friday, January 31, 2025

Last day to drop without a mark of "W" and receive a refund: Friday, January 31, 2025

Last day to withdraw without a "W" on transcript or change pass/no pass to letter grade: Friday, February 28, 2025

Last day to drop with a mark of "W": Friday, April 11, 2025

Last day of classes: Friday, May 2, 2025

End of session: Wednesday, May 14, 2025

XI. Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

Note: 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.

WEEK	TOPICS/ACTIVITIES	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
		(To be read/prepared before class.)
Week 1 January 14	 Course Introduction Assignments & expectations of performance Aspirational Marketing/ Laddering up to higher values 	 Course syllabus Course project specifications
Week 2	This Week in Marketing	Building a Story Brand, Sections 1 & 2
January 21	 Lecture: Brand Myth, Brand Ideals & Brand Principles Reading Discussion/Brand Script Workshop 	
Week 3	This Week in Marketing	Different, Part 1
January 28	Digital Success Presentations	• <i>BrandScript</i> due January 27, no later than 11:59 PM
	Selected student BrandScript presentations	
	Reading Discussion	
	Assign Brand Teams	
Week 4	This Week in Marketing	Different, Part 2
February 4	Digital Success Presentations	
	Lecture & Workshop: The Art of the Creative Brief	
	Reading Discussion	

WEEK TOPICS/ACTIVITIES	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
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		(To be read/prepared before class.)
Week 5 February 11	 This Week in Marketing Digital Success Presentations Reading Discussion 	 Team Project Part 1 due February 10, no later than 11:59PM. Different, Part 3
Week 6		
February 18	Spring Break – No Class	
Week 7 February 25	 This Week in Marketing Digital Success Presentations Team Meetings with Professor 	 Team Project Part 2 due February 24, no later than 11:59PM. Video: Long Strange Trip, Episode 5, "Dead Heads," on Amazon Video
Week 8	Reading Discussion This Week in Marketing	Hit Makers, Introduction, Chapters 1-3
March 4	 Digital Success Presentations Part 2 Presentations Reading Discussion What Marketers Can Learn from The Grateful Dead 	
Week 9	This Week in Marketing	Hit Makers, Chapters 4- 6
March 11	 Digital Success Presentations Reading Discussion Lecture: The Challenges of Personal Branding 	Jeff Hirsch Essay: <u>Kate Spade, Anthony</u> <u>Bourdain & Imposter Syndrome</u>

WEEK	TOPICS/ACTIVITIES	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS
		(To be read/prepared before class.)
Week 10	This Week in Marketing	Videos:
March 18	Digital Success Presentations	The Inventor: Out for Blood in Silicon Valley (HBO/Amazon Prime)
	Reading/Video Discussion	<i>"Long Strange Trip,"</i> Episode 5, "Dead Heads," (Amazon Video)
		<i>"The Inventor: Out for Blood in Silicon Valley"</i> (HBO/Amazon Prime)
		"Sour Grapes (Netflix)
		Articles:
		<u>Ellen DeGeneres's Relatability Crisis, The</u> <u>New Yorker</u>
		A Vintage Crime, Vanity Fair
		<u>Six Personal Branding Lessons We Can</u> <u>Learn from Donald Trump, Forbes</u>
Week 11	This Week in Marketing	Hit Makers, Chapters 7- 12
March 25	Digital Success Presentations	 Personal Branding Creative Brief due March 24, no later than 11:59PM
	Reading Discussion	
	 Selected Student Personal Branding Creative Brief Presentations 	
Week 12	This Week in Marketing	Revised Creative Briefs due March 3, not
April 1	Digital Success Presentations	later than 11:59PM
	Reading Discussion	
	30-minute Individual Sessions with Professor to review Creative Briefs (Some in- class, the balance via Zoom)	

WEEK	TOPICS/ACTIVITIES	READINGS & ASSIGNMENTS (To be read/prepared before class.)
Week 13 April 8	This Week in MarketingDigital Success Presentations	• Personal Branding Marketing Plan Presentations due April 7, no later than 11:59PM
	Guest Lecture: From Strategy to Execution: How to bring brand positioning to life.	
Week 14	Meetings with Professor to finalize presentations	
April 15		
Week 15 April 22	 Final Presentations 	• Personal Branding Plan Project and Final Presentations due April 21, no later than 11:59PM
	Final Presentations	
Week 16	No class: Study Week	
April 29		
Week 17	Summative Course Experience Due	
May 6		

XII. Policies and Procedures

Additional Policies

More on Class Participation

Each student must contribute to the learning in this class. In most class sessions, you must speak, ask questions, argue respectfully. To do so, you must prepare well: read the assigned materials before class; read, view or listen to other relevant and interesting content; think. Staying silent is poor behavior. Silence is especially unacceptable when we have guest speakers. It sets a poor impression of being disengaged. Judgment of participation is based on the instructors' aggregate impressions gained throughout the semester. If you participate frequently and enthusiastically, you will earn the full score. You will not earn the full score by merely attending classes. Simply attending classes and only occasionally participating will result in a mediocre score (e.g., half of the

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possible score). If you are absent, disengaged or disrespectful, you will earn zero.

The Importance of Great Writing

A graduate program in a globally renowned graduate program demands great writing, as does the greater world at large beyond school. Marketers must be adept communicators. Clear, focused expression, both in oral presentations and in writing is critical. Branding and the development of Creative Briefs, in particular, require the very precise selection of appropriate language and nuance.

Error free, grammatically correct papers and presentations are the cost of entry. All assignments must be spell and grammar checked. More important are ideas that are presented clearly and logically. There must be no confusion regarding facts presented or your perspective on those facts.

Attendance and Punctuality

A foundational behavior in business and the world at large is showing up on time, prepared and engaged. Please show up to class on time.

Equally important, please be present, that is, "in the moment," focused on what is going on in class.

Not being here (i.e., being absent or being late) will accumulate penalties. No unexcused absences are permitted. Students must notify the professor in advance of an absence, even if it is just before class starts. Most reasonable excuses (illness, family issues, emergencies, etc.) will be accepted.

Two excused absences will be permitted, though the professor will be less forgiving on the second absence.

Any unexcused absence will lower your final grade by one full grade. (For example, and "A" turns into a "B" and a "B" turns into a "C.")

Two unexcused absences will result in a failing grade.

Attention and Mobile Screens in Class

Students must be 100% focused on lectures, discussions or other in-class activities when in class.

Notes should be taken by hand, written in a notebook.

Laptops, phones, tablets, or other devices may <u>not</u> be used in class without explicit direction from the professor. Texting, checking emails, visiting websites, using apps, paying video games, etc. are strictly forbidden in the classroom.

Violation of this policy may result in being asked to leave the classroom and will result in penalties on the final grade.

AI Policy

I expect you to use AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Microsoft Co-Pilot) and image generation tools for class assignments. Learning to use AI is an emerging skill, and I welcome the opportunity to meet with you to provide guidance with these tools during office hours or after class. Keep in mind the following:

- Al tools are permitted to help you brainstorm topics or revise work you have already written.
- If you provide minimum-effort prompts, you will get low-quality results. You will need to refine your prompts to get good outcomes. This will take work.
- Proceed with caution when using AI tools and do not assume the information provided is accurate or trustworthy If it gives you a number or fact, assume it is incorrect unless you either know the correct answer or can verify its accuracy with another source. You will be responsible for any errors or omissions provided by the tool. It works best for topics you understand.
- Al is a tool, but one that you need to acknowledge using. Please include a
 paragraph at the end of any assignment that uses Al explaining how (and why)
 you used Al and indicate/specify the prompts you used to obtain the results what
 prompts you used to get the results. Failure to do so is a violation of academic
 integrity policies.
- Be thoughtful about when AI is useful. Consider its appropriateness for each assignment or circumstance. The use of AI tools requires attribution. You are expected to clearly attribute any material generated by the tool used.

Communication

Students should feel free to contact me with questions and concerns. Email for a phone, Zoom or face-to-face meeting.

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems a. Academic Conduct

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Plagiarism

Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, "Behavior Violating University Standards" <u>policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b</u>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <u>policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct</u>.

b. Support Systems

Counseling and Mental Health - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call studenthealth.usc.edu/counseling

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

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 1 (800) 273-8255 – 24/7 on call suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention and Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-9355(WELL), press "0" after hours – 24/7 on call

studenthealth.usc.edu/sexual-assault

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm.

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)- (213) 740-5086 | Title IX – (213) 821-8298 equity.usc.edu, titleix.usc.edu

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. The university prohibits discrimination or harassment based on the following *protected characteristics*: race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, medical condition, mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, genetic information, and any other characteristic which may be specified in applicable laws and governmental regulations. The university also prohibits sexual assault, non-consensual sexual contact, sexual misconduct, intimate partner violence, stalking, malicious dissuasion, retaliation, and violation of interim measures.

Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298 usc-advocate.symplicity.com/care_report

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

The Office of Disability Services and Programs - (213) 740-0776 dsp.usc.edu

Support and accommodations for students with disabilities. Services include assistance in providing readers/notetakers/interpreters, special accommodations for test taking needs, assistance with architectural barriers, assistive technology, and support for individual needs.

USC Support and Advocacy - (213) 821-4710 uscsa.usc.edu

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

Diversity at USC - (213) 740-2101

diversity.usc.edu

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 dps.usc.edu, emergency.usc.edu

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) 442-120 – 24/7 on call dps.usc.edu

Non-emergency assistance or information.

Annenberg Student Success Fund

https://annenberg.usc.edu/current-students/resources/additional-funding-resources 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.

Breaking Bread Program [undergraduate students only] https://undergrad.usc.edu/faculty/bread/

The Breaking Bread Program is designed to provide individual undergraduate students with an opportunity to meet and have scholarly discussions with faculty members outside of the normal classroom setting. Through this program, students and faculty enjoy good company and great conversation by literally "breaking bread" over a meal together and USC will pick up the tab! Your meal event can take place anywhere

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outside of the normal classroom setting. Your venue can be a restaurant or eatery on or off-campus.

XIII. About Your Instructor

Jeffrey B. Hirsch is the Founder & President of <u>The Right Brain Studio</u> and Adjunct Professor in the graduate communications program at the University of Southern California's Annenberg School.

His business development strategies and new product ideas are responsible for hundreds of millions of dollars in revenues for some of the world's top brands such as Pepsi, Colgate-Palmolive, General Mills, Johnson & Johnson, Brown-Forman, Pizza Hut, Taco Bell, Anheuser-Busch, Walt Disney, and many others.

A former executive with DKG Advertising, Brown-Forman, Campbell-Mithun and Chiat/Day, Jeff knows how to find the emotional core of a brand's identity.

An avid reader, fitness fanatic, meditator, golfer, filmgoer and music lover, Jeff enjoys performing solo – or joining his band – at local clubs and events.

Jeff has an M.S. in Advertising and a B.S. in Communications from Northwestern University.