

CREATIVE CAREER LAB | ART475 | Spring 2026

01 | INSTRUCTOR

Kerri Soukup, Adjunct Instructor

Email kmsoukup@fhsu.edu

Office Hours: Friday 3-6 pm (link to schedule on Blackboard course site)

2 | COURSE

Class Hours: 6:30-8:20 pm MW + 2 hours of asynchronous lab time

2026S_ART475_VA_Topics in Art II: Creative Career Lab

Zoom link available on Blackboard

3 | COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course preps graphic design students to make their way from classroom to career. Topics cover a range of subject matter from personal brand positioning to working through a project from brief to buy-in as well as ways to prioritize and maintain wellness in a deadline-driven industry. By mixing projects with informational lectures, students gain a deeper understanding of ways to apply their skills within the creative industry landscape and gain hands-on experience using creativity to solve business problems. Additionally, guest perspectives will provide more viewpoints and knowledge of the disciplines and roles that can be expected in future ways of working.

4 | COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

- 1. Personal Brand and Positioning:** Will gain a clearer understanding of their own positioning to implement in their profiles, resume, curious conversations and interviews.
- 2. Brief to Buy-in:** Will learn about the elements in a brief, how to develop strategic insights to set up concepts and territories, tell a dynamic story to sell creative solutions and navigate feedback to make ideas stronger. Students should leave this class with an additional portfolio-level project.
- 3. Wellness While Working:** Practices and tools to proactively manage burnout and stay inspired through deadlines and demands. Increased clarity on individual values and how this plays a role in prioritizing and protecting our energy for what matters.

5 | COURSE MATERIALS

Technology Requirement: All students enrolled at Fort Hays State University are expected to have a computer* for use in a variety of university learning experiences and Wi-fi access.

Supplementary Links and Articles: will be available on Blackboard.

6 | STUDENT RESOURCES

Students have access to academic services, technical support, and student services at Fort Hays State University. You can find the resources online at FHSU Blackboard Student Tutorials. For more information, you can contact TigerTech at 785-628-3478 or FHSU TigerTech.

7 | TEACHING, LEARNING METHODS, & COURSE STRUCTURE

Classes will be fully taught on Zoom Monday and Wednesday. Fridays are asynchronous working time. Most projects will be submitted on Blackboard.

Instruction will be a combination of lecture, interactive discussion, articles and links, student research, uploaded supplemental materials, collaborative project working time, guest critiques and panels, presentations and feedback sessions.

There is an assigned module for each week of the semester. Students will be expected to complete the assignments for each module by the completion date of that assigned module unless otherwise noted. This includes a combination of individual projects and deliverables as well as partner projects, deadlines and presentations.

8 | ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Research and Brainstorming DISCLOSURE AND CITATIONS

Visual Imagery Creation STRICTLY PROHIBITED:

The use of AI-generated imagery is strictly prohibited in this course. Academic integrity is essential. Assignments suspected of or found to be plagiarized or employ the use of unauthorized AI tools will be subject to the University Academic Honesty Policy and may result in a 0 for the assignment, failure of the course, and, if warranted, expulsion from FHSU.

Written Content Creation WITH PERMISSION AND DISCLOSURE:

Students can use AI-generated texts only on designated portions of written assignments in this course if professor permission is obtained in advance and the content generated is properly cited.

Unless permitted to use AI tools, each student is expected to complete each assignment without substantive assistance from AI. Unauthorized or suspected unauthorized use of AI will be subject to the FHSU Academic Honesty Policy. It may result in a 0 for the assignment, failure of the course, and, if warranted, expulsion from FHSU.

9 | COURSE POLICIES

Class Attendance/Participation

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Lectures will be given on any day and you will be expected to know the material for class discussions and projects. Three unexcused absences will result in the loss of a letter grade for the semester. Five unexcused absences will result in the final grade of "U". Excused absences are illness and official University travel. If you know you must be absent, please call, e-mail, or leave a message with the art office (628-4247). Please be on time for class. Being tardy two times will equal one absence, and so on.

Assignment Due Dates

When a deadline is set, you are expected to meet it on time. You must spend extra time out of class to work on your projects. Only serious reasons will be accepted for an extension. All projects are due on the noted day unless prior arrangements are made. Every day a project is turned in late, one letter grade will be deducted from the total grade. Assignments turned in late will be accepted up to two class periods late. After that, it is an automatic "U" (unless other arrangements have been made).

Procedures for Assignment Submission

Each project will have an associated Learning Module on Blackboard. Students must upload their finished project in Blackboard before class begins on the due date and plan to screen share during class for presentations and working sessions.

Other Policies

Academic integrity is essential. Students are open to seek inspiration, but severe penalties will be enforced if you directly copy existing work. Unless using a mobile device for research or taking notes, keep them silent and out-of-reach.

10 | UNIVERSITY POLICIES + RESOURCES

- [Academic Honesty](#)
- [Attendance](#)
- [Withdrawal](#)
- [Student Accessibility Services](#)
- [Health and Wellness Services](#)
- [Career Services](#)
- [Technology Services](#)
- [Title IX Policy](#)

11 | GRADING CRITERIA + ASSESSMENT

Project grades will be based on concept/creativity, design/layout, presentation, collaboration, ability to take and incorporate feedback and execution. Letter grades will be given for each area, along with an explanation of the grade. Grades will be averaged at the end of the semester. Projects and points are posted on Blackboard and updated regularly. Grades will be posted within a week of turning in a project unless otherwise communicated.

Project 1: Personal Branding | Your True Story (200 points)

- A. Storytelling Exercise | 50
- B. Brand Assessment + Audit | 50
- C. Positioning and Values | 100

Project 2: Founders Brand | Brief to Buy-In (1200 points)

- A. Brand Assessment + Audit | 200
- B. Strategic Insights | 200
- C. Concept Territories | 300
- D. Final Presentation | 500

Project 3: Wellness While Working (400 points)

- A. Thought Piece | 200
- B. Applied to Your Brand | 200

Ongoing: Engagement, Collaboration and Participation (200 points)

TOTAL: 2000 points

12 | COURSE SCHEDULE

This schedule is tentative and might change during the semester depending on how the course evolves. The content is subject to change depending on students' engagement and progress and is intended to be fluid and iterative, mirroring the reality of professional and client-facing experiences. Students will be notified of the changes through announcements either in the class or at the Blackboard course site. All courses are in Central Time.

WEEK 1 JAN 21

BRAND POSITIONING What is your personal brand?
Why it matters, steps to create yours and tell your story
Project #1 Kickoff

WEEK 2 JAN 26

STORYTELLING + VALUES + STRENGTHS
How to stand out and craft your authentic story, Outreach to get input and self-reflection
Project #1A Due

WEEK 3 FEB 2

CRAFT YOUR STORY Putting the pieces together - your personal brand + Applying it
Project #1B/C Due + Presentations

WEEK 4 FEB 9

FOUNDER BRIEFS Work through a whole project starting with —> Meet the Founders
Project #2 Kickoff [5 briefs/challenges to work from, partners]

WEEK 5 FEB 16

STRATEGY WIPs – Brand Audits and early insights

WEEK 6 FEB 23

FOUNDATIONS The role of personas, consumer insights, journeys and user experience to understand the consumer mindset [guest Strategists + Business/Marketing]

Project #2A Due

WEEK 7 MAR 2

WIP Strategy and Territories - Working the Work with Kerri

WEEK 8 MAR 9

TISSUE SESSION Work In Progress with Founders
How to frame creative solutions as insights when shaping your work
Project #2B Due + Presentations

**SPRING BREAK MAR 16-20****WEEK 9 MAR 23**

FEEDBACK & FRAMING Giving and receiving feedback – how to pivot and not get stuck in your thinking, how to shape and tell a compelling story while creating

WEEK 10 MAR 30

PRACTICES AND TOOLS managing deadlines and boundaries while staying inspired, the creative process doesn't always have a clear finish line [meet a range of guest Creatives] + WIP time

WEEK 11 APR 6

THE ART OF THE SELL Presenting, from in-person to virtual Creative Concept Territories with Founders

Project #2C Due + Presentations

WEEK 12 APR 13

WORKING THE WORK Space to create and put those tools to practice, work time

WEEK 13 APR 20

CURIOUS CONVERSATIONS Bringing it all back, applying learnings to your brand story
Project #3 Kickoff Thought piece about wellness (input from research, discussions, interviews)

WEEK 14 APR 27

CRAFTING & CREATING Space to create and put those tools to practice, work time for Projects 2 + 3 WIP with Kerri

WEEK 15 MAY 4

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER Presentations with Founders with feedback incorporated and full creative execution and crafting.

Project #2D Due + Presentations

WEEK 16 MAY 11

FINALS

Project #3A/B Due + Presentations

Every week: Wellness Wednesdays Conversation Prompts + Class discussions to infuse wellness-while-working dialogue throughout the semester

The instructor reserves the right to modify this schedule throughout the semester.