

# Intro to Graphic Design

# Course Syllabus 2026

---

Torah High School

## Instructor

Ms. Phan

[mytienphan.mtp@gmail.com](mailto:mytienphan.mtp@gmail.com)

## Class time

Friday 10:30-11:05PM

**Room 307**

## Course Description

This hands-on elective introduces students to the fundamentals of graphic design and visual communication through project-based learning. Throughout the semester, students will explore core design elements and principles, typography, layout, color theory, branding, and commonly used digital tools.

Students will learn how designers communicate messages visually, evoke emotion, and design for specific audiences. By the end of the course, students will apply their skills to create cohesive visual work and develop a basic brand identity project!

## Major Units of Study

- Unit 1 – Introduction to Graphic Design
  - ◆ Define graphic design and visual communication
  - ◆ Recognize effective vs. ineffective design using design principles
- Unit 2 – Typography & Layout
  - ◆ Understand typography basics (typefaces, hierarchy, readability)
  - ◆ Use spacing, alignment, and visual hierarchy
  - ◆ Plan and organize layouts using grid concepts

- Unit 3 – Digital Design Tools
  - ◆ Learn core workflows in tools such as Photopea and Canva
  - ◆ Work with images, text, and layered compositions
  - ◆ Export designs in appropriate formats
- Unit 4 – Color Theory & Branding
  - ◆ Apply color theory and color harmony principles
  - ◆ Use color to influence mood and message
  - ◆ Combine typography, color, and layout to develop a visual brand identity!

## Grading Policies & Expectations

### Late Work

Since critique and feedback are an important part of this class, submitting something – even if unfinished – is always better than submitting nothing. Work-in-progress designs can still receive valuable feedback and help you improve your final design.

Assignments may be submitted up to one week late (by the next class meeting) for partial credit, with a 25% grade reduction. Work submitted after one week may still be turned in for up to 50% maximum credit until the end of the semester.

Each quarter, students receive 1 late-work freebie, allowing submission up to one week late with no grade deduction. If unused by the end of the semester, it converts to 1% extra credit.

### Grade Weights

Activities	60%
Critiques	20%
Discussions	20%

### Activities

- **In-class:** Guided, hands-on design exercises and tool demonstrations that build foundational skills and introduce new techniques. Students will create draft designs, practice workflows, and receive feedback.
- **Homework:** Design assignments that expand on in-class techniques and require creative problem-solving, iteration, and refinement.



## Critiques

Structured design feedback sessions focused on evaluating visual work and creative decisions. Critiques may be conducted verbally in class, or submitted as written/ annotated feedback. Formats may include partner critiques or whole-class reviews. Students are expected to give specific, constructive feedback using design vocabulary and course concepts.

## Discussions

Guided written prompts that ask students to analyze design examples, explain their creative process, and connect course concepts to real-world media. Discussions may include design analysis, concept development, and process reflections. Students are also required to respond to at least one classmate's post or comment.

## Required Materials

→ Laptop

### Optional but helpful:

→ Computer mouse: more precise than a trackpad

→ Personal USB drive: to save digital work

## Tips for Success

Be willing to experiment and iterate. Strong design rarely happens on the first try – revision is part of the creative process. Ask for feedback, test new ideas, and don't be afraid to adjust your work. Pay attention to details like spacing, alignment, and readability. Manage your time, save your files carefully, and come ready to create each class. The more you practice and refine your designs, the stronger your skills will become.

