



Midwestern State University  
MASS COMMUNICATION  
DIGITAL FILM PRODUCTION – MCOM 4463  
FALL 2025: FA D101, TR 11AM – 12:20PM

#### Contact Information

Instructor: Jonathon Quam  
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#### Course Description

This course is an immersive workshop in digital film production. Students are responsible for developing and producing a 7–10 minute short film or documentary, either independently or in small teams. The course emphasizes the full production cycle—from concept development and pre-production planning to principal photography, editing, and final delivery.

Each student must serve in a primary creative role on a project—such as director, writer, cinematographer, or editor—while also contributing collaboratively to peer projects. In addition to their own work, students are expected to support classmates through crew participation, feedback, and shared production responsibilities.

By the end of the semester, students will complete a polished short film or documentary suitable for portfolio inclusion and potential festival submission. Emphasis is placed on professional workflow, creative leadership, and storytelling craft.

Textbook & Instructional Materials:

Required Materials: Class 10/UHS-I or UHS-II SD Card (64 or 128Gb)

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/mph762vn>

Suggested Reading: *In the Blink of an Eye* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), Walter Murch, 1995

*Sight, Sound, Motion* (7th ed.), Herbert Zettl, 2016

## Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook 2017-18](#)

### Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

**Academic Dishonesty:** Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

**Plagiarism:** Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Any writing that is not the work of you or your group members is plagiarism. Students in this course are expected to adhere to the MSU Student Honor Code.

**AI Statement:** Welcome to the wide world of new programs that can "do your writing for you". Why did I put that into quotes? Because some of the writing is problematic and a lot of it is downright bland. Having said that, I accept that this is yet another way to get around doing your own work, if that is the choice being made. But maybe it can be used for good, and that is where we are right now. In the "what if" and "how to" zone. We might have assignments that use or integrate AI writing this semester. There might be other places where it simply isn't appropriate for the assignment. Perhaps AI can be a helpful tool, and that is part of what we can explore this semester. With that in mind, if you are found to have used AI writing programs in a place where they are not explicitly allowed on an assignment, you will receive a '0' grade, be reported for academic dishonesty, and will not have the chance to re-do or replace that assignment. I'd prefer that we see this as a chance to learn and adapt rather than just another way to cheat, so we'll approach it from that angle and see where we end up. I look forward to entering this newish universe with you.

### Grading

**Productions:** Each student will complete a variety of single and team productions designed to give a hands-on study of field production techniques including: short documentaries, interview projects, multitrack audio editing, news packages, and event/performance based projects. **Talent:** Students will have the option of becoming on-air talent, but it is not required.

Location Strike: Whenever an outside production is required; it will be the responsibility of all in the class to transport all needed gear to and from the location in a safe and timely manner. All items must be stored properly and returned in working order. If there is an issue with damage or malfunctioning equipment a proper report must be logged before you go out on location.

Assignments	Percentage
Productions: Technical	25
Productions: Writing	25
Deadlines	10
Crew Grade	10
Participation	30

Senior Portfolio Requirement: Please note that all mass communication majors are required to submit a portfolio as part of their Internship course (Internship is a prerequisite to Senior Production). This requirement is a part of MSU's reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and is non-negotiable. Through the portfolio, students are required to demonstrate communication competence through the written word and visual communication; two examples of each competency are required.

As you go through this and other classes, you are responsible for saving course work that could be included in your senior portfolio.

Please see me, your adviser, the department chair or any mass communication faculty member for handouts with more information ("Mass Communication Portfolio Competencies" and "Mass Communication Portfolio FAQ"). These handouts are also available on our department web page:  
<http://finearts.mwsu.edu/masscomm/>.

Deadlines must be met. All missed deadlines result in a 25% loss on the project. Three missed deadlines will result in being dropped from the course. Deadlines will be handed out with assignments.

Deadlines:

Deadlines will be assigned to individual shoots. Meeting these is essential to your professional growth. The world works on deadlines. Meet the deadlines, up to 25% of your grade depends on it.

Pitches: Every student is responsible for pitching their own stories. For investigative reports, talent driven stories, and entertainment productions

students can pitch in pairs. Failure to bring a story to the pitch meeting will result in the loss of a participation percentage.

Course Activities: This class will consist of lectures, in and out of class screenings, and audio/video projects.

Course Materials and Readings: In addition to the recommended chapters in the text, a number of current articles will be distributed, usually via D2L (these will be required readings).

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

#### Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance: Each student will be allowed 2 absences for any reason. If you are to be absent on the date a project is due, you must still turn your project in to me on time. Beyond these two absences, the student will lose 25% of their final semester grade for any absences for any reason that is not university approved. Missing a production day will result in a failing grade on that production.

#### **• THE INSTRUCTOR'S RECORDS REGARDING ABSCENCES ARE THE ONLY ONES THAT COUNT AND IT IS THE STUDENTS' RESPONSIBILITY TO CHECK IN IF LATE.**

Withheld Grades/Semester Grades Policy: Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Course Conduct: Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program. Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom.

### Cell Phones and Other Recording Devices

The use of cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class. The instructor may direct, from time to time, on the possible use of cell phones for legitimate class reasons. Recording the class is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or by obtaining written consent by the instructor.

### Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

### Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

### Services for Students With Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to <http://www.mwsu.edu/student-life/disability>.

### College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

Refer to: [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#)

### Active Shooter

The safety and security of our campus is the responsibility of everyone in our community. Each of us has an obligation to be prepared to appropriately respond to threats to our campus, such as an active aggressor. Please review the information provided by MSU Police Department regarding the options and strategies we can all use to stay safe during difficult situations. For more

information, visit [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

#### Smoking/Tobacco Policy

College policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by WATC. Adult students may smoke only in the outside designated-smoking areas at each location.

#### Alcohol and Drug Policy

To comply with the Drug Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989 and subsequent amendments, students and employees of Midwestern State are informed that strictly enforced policies are in place which prohibits the unlawful possession, use or distribution of any illicit drugs, including alcohol, on university property or as part of any university-sponsored activity. Students and employees are also subject to all applicable legal sanctions under local, state and federal law for any offenses involving illicit drugs on University property or at University-sponsored activities.

#### Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

#### Cleaning Protocols

Students will be expected to sanitize equipment before they check it out and when they return it as well. Each student will be assigned access to specific pieces of equipment to minimize the number of students who use any single camera, microphone, light kit or recording device. Students will be allowed to use their own equipment if approved by the instructor. You will be expected to arrange usage needs with your equipment group.

#### University Information on Campus Coronavirus Policies

Refer to: <https://msutexas.edu/coronavirus/>

#### Office Hours

I will be holding the required number of office hours this semester; however, I will not be meeting with students in my office. If you require an in-person meeting, a sign-up will be available on my door. We will meet with masks in the studio. If you need help on a project, I will be able to access your computer from my office to demonstrate how to fix issues you may be having. Otherwise, the expectation will be that meetings are done via Zoom, Skype or Meet.

#### Social Distancing

I expect adherence to social distancing policies in the entire D-Wing of the Mass Communication building. Students must maintain a six foot separation. If you do

not adhere to this, you will lose equipment privileges, regardless of any assignment you have due.

### Class Structure

We will be using a split student model this semester. Only half of the class can be in the lab at one time. You will be assigned to either Monday or Wednesday for in-person instruction; however, you will be expected to attend the online zoom broadcast unless told otherwise. Attendance will be taken for the in-person and online students. Recordings of the lectures will be posted online.

### Attendance Addendum

Any student who will miss class due to illness should notify the instructor as soon as possible. If you are experiencing symptoms of any illness, please stay home and attend the online lecture. If you are experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19, please seek medical help right away.

### Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. Please understand that we will use D2L very heavily just in case there is a need to switch to online instruction. If that switch were to occur our equipment and software will change, but our projects and course goals will not. All projects will remain the same in case of a switch to online instruction.

### Course Schedule

<b>Week 1</b> 08/25 – 08/29	<b>COURSE OVERVIEW/EXPECTATIONS</b>  <b>Roles in the Newsroom and Studio</b>  <b>Roles in Narrative Production</b>
<b>Week 2</b> 09/01 – 09/05	<b>Tuesday:</b> Investigative Reporting and Ethical Journalism  <b>Thursday:</b> Screenwriting and Story Development
<b>Week 3</b> 09/08 – 09/12	<b>Tuesday:</b> Multicam Directing and Technical Directing Workflow  <b>Thursday:</b> Visual Storytelling and Cinematic Language

<b>Week 4</b> 09/15 – 09/19	<b>Tuesday:</b> Sports Production and Live Event Coverage  <b>Thursday:</b> Working with Actors – Casting, Rehearsals, and Performance Direction
<b>Week 5</b> 09/22 – 09/26	<b>Tuesday:</b> Field Reporting – Shooting & Editing News Packages  <b>Thursday:</b> Cinematography I – Cameras, Lenses, and Composition
<b>Week 6</b> 09/29 – 10/03	<b>Tuesday:</b> Podcasting & Audio Production for Broadcast  <b>Thursday:</b> Sound Design and Audio for Film
<b>Week 7</b> 10/06 – 10/10	<b>Tuesday:</b> Producing for Digital and Social Platforms (short-form broadcast content)  <b>Thursday:</b> Cinematography II – Lighting for Mood and Narrative
<b>Week 8</b> 10/13 – 10/17	<b>Tuesday:</b> Studio Management and Show Running (control room workflow)  <b>Thursday:</b> Production Design and Visual Style
<b>Week 9</b> 10/20 – 10/24	<b>Tuesday:</b> Writing & Producing for Broadcast Anchors and Talent  <b>Thursday:</b> Editing I – Narrative Structure and Rhythm
<b>Week 10</b> 10/27 – 10/31	<b>Tuesday:</b> Documentary Approaches in Broadcast News  <b>Thursday:</b> Documentary Approaches in Film



<b>Week 11</b> 11/03 – 11/07	<b>Tuesday:</b> Advanced Graphics and On-Screen Visuals for News  <b>Thursday:</b> Editing II – Color Grading and Post Workflow
<b>Week 12</b> 11/10 – 11/14	<b>Tuesday:</b> Producing Interviews and Talk-Style Shows  <b>Thursday:</b> Working with Soundtracks and Music Licensing
<b>Week 13</b> 11/17 – 11/21	<b>Tuesday:</b> Audience Engagement and Analytics in Broadcast Media  <b>Thursday:</b> Independent Film Distribution and Festival Strategy
<b>Week 14</b> 11/24 – 11/28	<b>Tuesday:</b> Professional Practices – Resumes, Demo Reels, and Careers  <b>THANKSGIVING WEEK</b>
<b>Week 15</b> 12/01 – 12/05	<b>Tuesday:</b> Producing a Live Final Project (team workflow, deadline management)  <b>Thursday:</b> Preparing Films for Final Screening (exports, QC, delivery)
<b>Week 16</b> 12/08 – 12/12	<b>FINAL PRODUCTION SHOWCASE!</b>  <b>Final: 12/09, 1PM</b>