



Course Syllabus: Introduction to Mass Communication

Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts
MCOM 1233 Section 201
Spring 2020 | MWF 10:00-10:50 a.m.

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Mitzi Lewis

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NOTE: For all e-mail correspondence, please make the subject line look like this:
INTRO TO MASS COMM: SUBJECT OF MESSAGE

If you send an email to me, treat it as a professional means of communication. This means it should include a salutation, correct punctuation, and a proper closing.

Course Description

You will survey the mass communication process and mass media, including print media, radio/recording, television, Internet, and emerging media. You will learn about media issues, societal effects, trends, and media literacy.

Learning Outcomes

You begin your core for mass communication with this course. This course also satisfies the Cultural & Global Understanding MSU core curriculum requirement. Students of any major can benefit from this course because they will become better-informed media consumers.

- This course is designed to give you an overview of how the mass media operate and their place in American society.
- You will briefly examine career opportunities in mass communication.

- You will examine and analyze contemporary issues facing the mass media.

As this is a survey course, emphasis will be placed on gaining a broad, general understanding of the mass media, and it will be difficult to study specific topics in depth. However, I encourage students to approach me about suggestions for more in-depth readings and/or projects on various topics.

Course Objectives

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Textbook & Instructional Materials

- Textbook: *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World*, 7th edition, by Ralph Hanson
- Persistence, patience, optimism, and an active mind

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program. 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.

Teaching and Learning Philosophy

Students' responsibility: Take responsibility for your own learning and take advantage of in- and out-of-classroom opportunities

Professor's (facilitator's) responsibility: Provide students with meaningful learning opportunities in the classroom and through assignments

Grading

Final grades will be based on a personal journal, a final exam, smaller assignments and quizzes, peer mentor activities, and professionalism. You should take note that you will be required to do a lot of writing over the course of the semester, and the quality of your writing will be a factor in your final grade. You will also be required to think critically about the issues being discussed and form coherent, defensible positions; I'm not interested in having you quote back the literature to me – I've read it. Details on all assignments will be given as the semester progresses.

Final grades will be based on the following.

Assignments	Percent
Journal	30%
Assignments and quizzes	40%
Final exam	25%
Professionalism	5%
Total	100%

Total points for final grade.

Grade	Points
A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	Less than 60%

Class Participation and Attendance

Because abundant lecturing tends to be counterproductive for both you and me, I try to include activities that are more interesting than straight lecture, such as discussions, presentations, field trips, guest speakers, etc. The success of this format depends on your willingness to **actively participate** in class discussions and other activities.

Attendance and participation are critical to your success. Another way to describe this is professionalism. **Professionalism** means that you're here, ready to engage in new opportunities.

The college learning environment is a professional environment. It is similar in many ways to a professional work environment. You are expected to demonstrate professional attitudes and behaviors; including, but not limited to, arriving on time, being prepared, actively participating, communicating respectfully, and staying for the full class period. If you miss class, you miss the chance to participate in your education and the education of others in class. Your peers are counting on you to be in class and to participate. A peer evaluation will be distributed toward the end of the semester.

If you miss class without an acceptable excuse you get a **zero** for that day's participation and class work and any work that is due.

If you must miss class, please let me know BEFORE the class period that you will miss. You may call my office and leave me a voice mail or you may notify me by e-mail. An absence may be excused at my discretion in accordance with university policy if you provide documentation of the reason for your absence. When you have an acceptable excuse, you are responsible for finding out what you missed and arranging to make it up with the instructor. Missed work must be made up within one week of when your return to class, or you will receive a zero.

Plan carefully regarding appointments and/or work schedules to avoid missing class. Any personal emergencies that arise will be dealt with on an individual basis. Do not assume you will be allowed to make up assignments missed during an unexcused absence. If you MISS CLASS, it is **YOUR** responsibility to find out what you missed. I DO NOT HAVE TIME TO PROVIDE INDIVIDUAL "MAKE-UPS" TO MISSED CLASS SESSIONS. THIS IS WHY WE HAVE CLASS MEETINGS.

In class assignments will help you immediately apply concepts covered in class. If you miss a class you get a "zero" for that day's in-class assignments. If you miss more than two classes, or if you are habitually late or leave early, **your final grade may be lowered by 1/3 letter grade for each instance beyond two absences**. Two tardies = one absence. One minute to 19 minutes late = one tardy. Twenty minutes or more late = one absence. Leaving before class is

dismissed = one absence. After four absences or tardies, you are subject to being dropped from the course with a grade of "F."

I reserve the right to determine what, exactly, constitutes an excused absence or when a late arrival is excusable.

Finally, it is unacceptable to skip another class to work on a project for this class. Do not ask me for an excused absence to work on another course. Plan accordingly and be organized.

Some additional guidelines:

- You are responsible for all material presented in every class period, whether present or not.
- If you miss a class period you should obtain the material presented from another classmate. (I will not repeat lecture material that was missed. Handouts are available from my office – it is your responsibility to come get them.)

Journal

You will be required to keep a journal consisting of articles relating to the mass media, your responses to the articles and responses to in-class activities. You are required to work on this assignment throughout the semester. The deadline for the journals is **Monday, May 4, 2020, at the beginning of class. Plan ahead. There will be no extensions!**

Assignments and Quizzes

You will be asked to complete assignments and quizzes to reinforce concepts you are learning in class.

Please note that the number of quizzes and assignments is not set in stone. This means that it is impossible at the outset of the semester to determine how much each individual quiz or assignment will be worth.

Final Exam

The final exam will be **Wednesday, May 13, 2020, 10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

More about Grading

- In the professional world, if you can't show up on time and make your deadlines, you won't keep your job. Assignments must be completed on time in the format specified.
- Reading assignments are to be completed by the day they are assigned.
- Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date.
- Each page of each assignment must be clearly labeled with your name, the assignment, the date, the page number and the total number of pages.
- Unless otherwise noted, assignments must be typed.
- Spelling and grammar count, in your assignments and your e-mails. Grades will be reduced for spelling and grammar errors.
- If you know you will be absent when an assignment is due, arrange to complete and hand in the assignment early.
- You are responsible for keeping all handouts and graded assignments.
- Remember that attendance is required and missing class can result in a grade reduction, a failing grade, or being dropped from class.

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 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](#).

Policies: Classroom/Conduct/Academic Dishonesty

- Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the

instruction will result in the instructor's removing the disruptive student(s) from the class.

- Eating and drinking are not allowed by the computers because we are working with expensive equipment that can very easily be damaged by food or drink. Food and drink may be left on the bookcase by the door. Any misuse or abuse of equipment will result in expulsion from the lab for the semester and/or assessment of replacement/repair costs.
- Students are expected to adhere to the Standards of Conduct as published in the Student Handbook. Students should refer to the current MSU student handbook and activities calendar for University policies and Student Honor Creed on academic dishonesty, class attendance, student's rights, and activities.
 - a. The main statement from the MSU Student Honor Creed should be a guiding principal for you: "As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so."
 - b. I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she engages in any form of academic dishonesty. I further reserve the right to recommend other sanctions as may be appropriate. Students are also encouraged to consult the following sources for additional discussion of students' rights and responsibilities regarding cheating, attendance and general conduct:
 - i. The MSU Student Honor Creed
 - ii. *MSU Undergraduate Catalog*
 - iii. *MSU Student Handbook*
 - c. In addition, the university requires faculty to provide this statement to all students: "By enrolling in this course, the student expressly grants MSU a "limited right" in all intellectual property created by the student for the purpose of this course. The "limited right" shall include but shall not be limited to the right to reproduce the student's work product in order to verify originality and authenticity, and educational purposes."
- On the Internet, plagiarism is especially easy. DO NOT give in to the temptation to copy-and-paste other people's work! YOUR WORK MUST BE YOUR OWN. If you plagiarize as a professional and get found out, you will damage if not destroy your own reputation and do great harm to the reputation of any organization you work for. In this class, plagiarism will have dire consequences.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism comes from the Latin word plagiarius, which means kidnapper. Webster's Dictionary defines plagiarize as to take (ideas, writings, etc.,) from (another) and pass them off as one's own-plagiarizer. Plagiarism includes the deliberate as well as inadvertent failure to properly attribute. All of the work you do in this class should be the work of you. **Violation of this policy will result in the student and/or group receiving a failing grade for this course. IGNORANCE IS NO EXCUSE...IF IN DOUBT-ASK! Students in this course should adhere to the MSU Student Honor Code.**

Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

Cell Phones and Other Recording Devices: The use of cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class. I 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 me.

Privacy

Federal privacy law prohibits me from releasing information about students to certain parties outside of the university without the signed consent of the student. Thus, in almost all cases I will not discuss your academic progress or other matters with your parents. Please do not have them call me. Regardless of these important legal considerations, it is my general policy to communicate with the students, not their parents, even when a student has signed a consent form. College students are adults and are expected to behave accordingly.

Social Justice

Social justice is one of Midwestern State University's stated core values, and I consider the classroom to be a place where students will be treated with respect as human beings, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, political beliefs, age, or ability. Moreover, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided the students can agree to disagree. It is my expectation that ALL students be able to consider the classroom a safe environment.

Managing Stress

Students may experience situations or challenges that can interfere with learning and interpersonal functioning including stress, anxiety, depression, alcohol and/or other drug use, concern for a friend or family member, loss, sleep difficulties, feeling hopeless or relationship problems. There are numerous campus resources available to students including:

- [MSU Counseling Center](#) (940-397-4618),
- [Vinson Health Center](#) (940-397-4231), and
- [Bruce and Graciela Redwine Student Wellness Center](#) (940-397-4206).

If you are experiencing an emergency, call 911 or the MSU Police Department at 940-397-4239. If you or someone you know is in a domestic violence or sexual assault crisis situation and wants information on what to do, call the 24-Hour Crisis Hotline: 1-800-621-8504.

[Additional mental-health resources](#) are available.

Furthermore, if you have outside circumstances that may affect your performance in this class – including but not limited to difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day, inadequate housing, family issues – please contact me if you are comfortable in doing so. I may be able to refer you to on-campus resources that will help you address the situation

Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.

Special Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, if you have emergency medical information that needs sharing, or if you need special accommodations in case the building must be evacuated, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. Please also contact Disability Support Services at 940-397-4140 in Clark Student Center, room 168, to document and coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities if you have not already done so.

Writing Center

Begin drafting papers as early as possible and take advantage of the MSU Writing Center! Writing tutors will not edit your papers for you, but they will provide

support and feedback at every stage of the writing process, from brainstorming to drafting, revising to proofreading. Hours and more will be posted at the [Writing Center web page](#).

Research and Creative Activity Opportunities at MSU

Enhancing Undergraduate Research Endeavors and Creative Activities (EURECA) is a program that provides opportunities for undergraduates to engage in high-quality research and creative activities with faculty. EURECA provides incentives and funding through a system that supports faculty and students engaged in collaborative research and creative works. For more information contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at (940) 397-6274 or by email at eureca@mwsu.edu or better yet, stop by the UGR office located in the atrium of the Clark Student Center, room 161. Information and resources are also available at the [EURECA web page](#).

Undergraduate Research Opportunities and Summer Workshop (UGROW)

Like EURECA, UGROW provides opportunities for students to conduct research with faculty. However, the research occurs in the summer. For five weeks UGROW students experience the authenticity of scientific research as well as research and creative activities in art, music, theater education, business, health and social sciences, English, history, etc. in a highly interdisciplinary environment. Students work on projects of their choice and present their findings at the end of program and the MSU Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Forum. Faculty members will introduce their research ideas February 13th, 2019, at 5:00 p.m., Comanche Suites, Clark Student Center. A break-out session with individual faculty members will follow. If you have any questions, contact the Office of Undergraduate Research at (940) 397-6274 or by email at eureca@mwsu.edu. More information and resources are available at the [UGROW web page](#).

Council on Undergraduate Research

To support undergraduate research and creative activities, Midwestern State University holds an enhanced institutional membership with the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR). This institutional membership includes unlimited memberships for any interested faculty, staff, and students. Students find

information on benefits and resources at the [CUR web page](#) and sign up *at no cost* at the [new member web page](#).

CUR Undergraduate Resources Webpage contains:

- Research Opportunities;
- Presentation Opportunities;
- Undergraduate Research Journals;
- CUR-Sponsored Student Events;
- The Registry of Undergraduate Researchers;
- And more!

Topics/Schedule

Course topics support achieving our course objectives. Course topics include:

- ⇒ Weeks 1 & 2: Introduction
 - Media/media literacy
 - Research and creative activities
- ⇒ Weeks 3, 4, 5: Print media
 - Books
 - Magazines
 - Newspapers and the news
- ⇒ Weeks 6, 7, 8, 9: Electronic media
 - Audio
 - Movies
 - Television
 - The Internet
 - Video games
- ⇒ Weeks 10, 11, 12: Strategic communication
 - Advertising
 - Public relations
- ⇒ Weeks 13, 14, 15: Regulation and control of the media
 - Media law
 - Media ethics
 - Thanksgiving Break
 - Global media
- ⇒ Week 16: Finals week

Please note this is a TENTATIVE schedule. Due to storms, last-minute changes, extended class discussions and my frequent inability to stick to the agenda I set at the beginning of the course, this schedule is likely to change. I reserve the right to change the class schedule if circumstances make it necessary.

Suggestions

- Attend class regularly.
- Remember I am available to help you. Ask for help immediately if you don't understand something. Waiting to "get it later" doesn't always work and could get you into trouble.
- Back up your work. Have two backups.
- Expect the unexpected.
- Try to do work for this class ahead of time. This will give you some cushion in case you have problems.
- Sometimes things will go smoothly, other times they won't – the important thing is to have fun and practice thinking and working with both sides of our brains.
- This is **your** class; we can do (or try) almost anything you want; be creative!

Final Caveat: I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus for any reason. This includes changing or deleting assignments. Sufficient notice will be given to you if changes to the syllabus are necessary.

By accepting this syllabus and staying enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand and accept the terms of this syllabus.

Thanks to Jim Sernoe and Jim Gorham who allowed me to adapt some of their classroom policies, to Stan Ketterer for allowing me to use his attendance policy, and to Jim Sernoe and Liz Minden, who shared ideas and assignments.