



Course Syllabus: Mass Communication Law

Mass Communication Dept./Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts
MCOM 4643 Section 101 – TR 9:30-10:50 a.m.
Room: C111 Fain Fine Arts Center
Fall 2026

Contact Information

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Office hours:

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, 2-4 p.m.

Also by appointment – in-person or on Zoom

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Course Description and Learning Objectives

Course Catalogue Description: Overview of how mass communication law works in this country with an emphasis on the First Amendment, free expression, and legal theory. Students will also study such narrow areas of media law as libel and obscenity.

Learning Objectives:

- This course is designed to give students an overview of how mass communication law works in this country, with special emphasis on how the First Amendment has been interpreted.
- In addition to learning the actual laws, students will evaluate how well those laws work.
- Students will gain a better understanding of the types of behavior that will lead to trouble during their mass communication careers.
- Students will become familiar and comfortable with legal jargon and gain a better understanding of how the justice system works.

As this is a survey course, emphasis will be placed on gaining a broad, general understanding, 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.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

I have decided not to use a formal textbook for this course this semester. However, required reading will consist of numerous handouts over the course of the semester and will be supplemented by considerable outside assignments/research. Note that there will be a lot of reading in this course and that reading loads vary considerably from week to week.

Handouts will be posted to our class D2L page if there is student interest/request. Materials for Discussion Leaders will also be posted to our class D2L page.

Grading

Final grades will be based on assignments and in-class quizzes; a Moot Court project related to media law; and a final project. 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 grades. In addition, you will find yourself in one or more public-speaking situations.

Assignments and Quizzes - 50%: This component of the grade will have two sub-components:

- Students will complete brief assignments that relate to the material being discussed. Further instructions will be given as the semester progresses.
- Regularly scheduled quizzes will be given to make sure students are keeping up with the reading, attending class regularly, and comprehending the material. These quizzes will be announced in advance.

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.

Moot Court – 30%: Students working in groups will participate in moot court trials as attorneys and jurors. Further instructions will be given as the semester progresses.

Final Project - 20%: Students will have the choice of two formats for the final project:

- A second round of Moot Court
- A take-home essay

Further instructions will be given as the semester progresses. Due dates will be determined later. In lieu of an in-class exam, we will spend the final exam session discussing your projects.

It should also be noted that studying the law requires an eye for detail as well as the ability to organize your thoughts. In all formats and projects/assignments, you will be required to think critically about the topics being discussed and form coherent, defensible positions. Traditional media-law textbooks or rote memorization can not help you understand how the law applies to you and how it works in this society. As a result, I'm not interested in true-false or multiple choices tests, nor am I interested in having you quote back the literature to me – I've read it.

Separate handouts with specific details will be provided for each component.

Table 1: Percentages Allocated To Each Component

Component	Percentage of Final Grade
Assignments and Quizzes	50
Moot Court	30
Final Essay or Final Moot Court	20

Table 2: Averages For Final Grade

Almost all assignments will be graded on a 0-100 scale unless otherwise announced. Final grades will be determined on the traditional 90/80/70/60 scale.

Grade	Average
A	90.0 to 100
B	80.0 to 89.9
C	70.0 to 79.9
D	60.0 to 69.9
F	Less than 60.0

In order to help students keep track of their progress toward course objectives, as well as to comply with university policy, the instructor will provide a Midterm Progress Report through each student's Navigate account. Any student who is in danger of earning a D or F in this course will receive notification. Students who are not complying with the attendance policy or are missing assignments will also receive notification that they are in danger of failing the course. Midterm grades will not be reported on the student's transcript, nor will they be calculated in the cumulative GPA. They do, however, give students an idea of where they stand at the midpoint of the semester. Students earning below a C at the midway point should contact me as soon as possible to discuss future actions.

Related: If you are unsure of where you stand in this course, you are welcome to – encouraged to – contact me. I am more than willing to go over your grades with you.

Also related: MSU faculty also have the option of filing an Academic Referral and/or a Conduct Referral with appropriate offices, both of which will follow-up with students. I reserve the right to file such referrals when needed. I will always try to contact the student first to request a meeting, but if the student does not respond appropriately, I will file the relevant referral(s).

Two final notes on grading: Critics from both within and outside of higher education have accused faculty of engaging in “grade inflation,” the idea that grades don’t truly reflect quality and instead have been devalued to the point that an A means very good, a B means average, and anything less than a B is failing. I’m not sure whether those people would include me in their criticisms, but I do know I try my best to adhere to the system as I understand it: an A means outstanding, a B means above average, and a C means average. Please remember these interpretations as the semester progresses.

Please remember also that attending every class and completing every assignment do not constitute outstanding quality or guarantee an A for the course. Attending every class and completing every assignment are only prerequisites for achieving a desired grade in the class. Too many students have argued that these are the reasons they deserved an A in the class, and I do not buy into this way of thinking.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the grading policies for the course. If you have questions, you should see me as soon as possible.

Attendance

Any individual faculty member or college has the authority to establish an attendance policy, providing the policy is in accordance with the General University Policies. As a result, please familiarize yourself with my attendance policies, described in detail below.

Attendance does not constitute a specific part of your grade, but perfect attendance is required. In the absence of a required textbook and exams, attendance is critical, and I will go to great lengths to attain full attendance (see note above re. quizzes, for example). If you have to miss a class or a deadline for any reason, please contact me IN ADVANCE to let me know. Contacting me in advance does not automatically excuse an absence, but it is a lot better than calling after the fact. If you fail to contact me before the next class period to explain an absence, it will be very difficult for

me to excuse the absence. Please note that work, medical and dental appointments that could easily be scheduled so they do not conflict with class attendance, hangovers, intramural games, visitors from out of town, fixing your roommate's computer, fraternity/sorority events, arguments with boyfriends/ girlfriends and studying for other classes do NOT constitute excused absences. See also the Missed Assignments Policy.

If you need to miss class due to a religious holiday, please see me as far in advance as possible.

If you need to miss class due to university-sponsored events such as field trips and sports, please see me as far in advance as possible. You will be required to complete the assigned work on or before the due date, and you will be required to submit an official form from the university before your absence.

As one of my former colleagues says, in the "real world," you can not do your job if you are not present to do it. Employers do not generally tolerate such behavior, and employees who offer weak, irritating excuses frequently find themselves unemployed and unemployable. The same rules apply in this course. I can't "make" you attend class and complete the work, and obviously you have the option to make attending classes and completing the work secondary (or lower) priorities. However, these choices are not without consequences.

If you cannot make it a priority to attend every class session, please drop now so another student, who is more serious, can have your spot.

It is your responsibility to see me if you miss class. I will not chase students around the city.

A related note: You are required to be on time and I have little tolerance for those who are continually late. Constant tardiness will be noted and could lower your final grade. I am not above embarrassing students who walk in late.

Missed Assignments Policy: If you miss any assignments or quizzes without being excused, you will fail the course. I reserve the right to determine whether an absence will be excused. In-class assignments may be excused at my discretion; however, all outside assignments must be completed within a reasonable time frame after your absence — no exceptions. In addition, I reserve the right to determine what, exactly, is a "reasonable time frame." In sum: This is a zero-tolerance policy. I have no time or patience for those who are not going to take this class seriously; thus, "three strikes and you're out" does not apply. "ONE strike and you're out" is more applicable. Some past students have flunked the course for this reason. In any case, I tend to be cynical about making up missed assignments, but if you have a legitimate problem, alternate arrangements can be made at my discretion.

If you cannot make it a priority to complete every assignment, on time, please drop now so another student, who is more serious, can have your spot.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the Missed Assignments Policy.

I reserve the right to drop students with an F if they have excessive absences or missed assignments. By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand my expectations for students concerning attendance.

Quizzes

See information above about quizzes that will be announced in advance. In addition, if I sense that students are not keeping up with the readings or attending class regularly, unannounced quizzes will be given, and they WILL count toward the final grade. Unannounced quizzes tend to take place on days when attendance and/or class participation leave something to be desired. These quizzes will be given at the beginning of class, and late students will receive scores of zero unless the late arrival is excused.

Mid-Term and Final Exams

As stated earlier, I do not believe in traditional true-false, multiple-choice, short-answer exams. They do not tell me what I need to know about students' learning and progress. Please see explanations above for grading criteria.

Projects Required

As noted above, details on all projects will be provided in separate handouts.

Extra Credit

Please note that there is no provision for extra credit. You are expected to complete all assignments and projects by their respective deadlines.

Late Work

Please note that there is no provision for late work. If you have a legitimate excuse for missing deadline, please contact me. I reserve the right to determine on a case-by-case basis whether a late assignment or project will be accepted and if so, whether it will be given full or partial credit. See also the Missed Assignment Policy in the Attendance section of the syllabus.

Make Up Work

Please see information under Late Work above. As stated, I reserve the right to make determinations on a case-by-case basis. See also the Missed Assignment Policy in the Attendance section of the syllabus.

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Students are urged to see me if they are having difficulties in the course. Further information is provided under Grading and Instructor Class Policies below. On-campus resources are also available.

Moffett Library

Moffett Library provides resources and services to support student's studies and assignments, including books, peer-reviewed journals, databases, and multimedia materials accessible both on campus and remotely. The library offers media equipment checkout, reservable study rooms, and research assistance from librarians to help students effectively find, evaluate, and use information. Get started on this [Moffett Library webpage](#) to explore these resources and learn how to best utilize the library.

Please note also that the Tutoring and Academic Support Programs office is located in Moffett Library.

Student Handbook

The 2026-27 Student Handbook, which lists student rights and responsibilities as well as selected MSU policies and procedures, is available here: [Student Handbook](#). Please see also sections below labeled Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures, Grading, Attendance, Desire-to-Learn (D2L), Grade Appeal Process, Additional Class Policies, Services for Students with Disabilities or Other Challenging Circumstances, and MSU Policies.

Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures

Don't cheat.

"Not everyone cheats. Not everyone cuts corners. There isn't a diploma in the world that's more valuable than your integrity. And you can't buy your integrity back." – Jason Gay, commenting in The Wall Street Journal on admissions scandals involving celebrities and the wealthy, March 14, 2019, p. A16.

The MSU Student Honor Creed, written and adopted by the 2002-2003 Student Senate, covers expectations related to cheating and other forms of

academic dishonesty. The main statement from this document is:

“As an MSU student, I pledge not to lie, cheat, steal, or help anyone else to do so.”

All students in my courses are expected to abide by this student-produced document, as well as all other related university policies. I will provide copies of the **MSU Student Honor Creed** to any student who requests one. It is also available online at [MSU Honor Creed](#).

In addition, students are required to be familiar with the MSU Code of Student Conduct as outlined in the MSU Student Handbook (the handbook is available online at [MSU Student Handbook](#)).

The university also 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.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the statement provided above and agree to comply with it.

I require **complete** honesty in producing your work. Working professionals are often encouraged to confer with their colleagues on strategies and wordings, but there is a difference between advice and blatant plagiarism.

I also realize it will be very easy to confer with colleagues on take-home assignments, but you should realize that instructors can usually identify when students have worked together. I further realize the Internet provides a convenient source of information, but students need to be aware that proper citation will be required.

Please note that submitting the same work for two courses is considered academic dishonesty. Even if another professor agrees to accept the work, I will treat it as academic dishonesty and take subsequent action.

Past students will tell you I take this issue very seriously and have not hesitated to confront them. A slightly higher grade on an assignment is not worth the extremely unpleasant experience of taking an accusation of academic dishonesty through the university hierarchy. Please don’t force me to do it.

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, such as, but not limited to, ChatGPT, Google Bard and Bing, is not permitted in this course; therefore, any use of AI tools for work in this class may be considered a violation of MSU and/or course policy as the work is not your own. You are required to produce your own work, using your own brain. The use of unauthorized AI tools is considered academic dishonesty and will result in referral to the Office of Student Conduct. Exceptions may be made for specific assignments/projects, but in general, students are required to proceed as if AI does not exist.

As others far more intelligent than I am have pointed out:

- AI allows a machine to do what humans can do. While in some contexts this is not a bad idea, we also know that when a skill or a muscle is not used, it degenerates. AI encourages us to stop writing, stop gathering information, stop analyzing, and stop thinking. I won't be part of it.
- AI is stolen intellectual property. It is built upon the work of others without paying nor oftentimes even crediting those who produce knowledge and art.

Bottom line: I am interested in what you, the student, produce, not what a machine produces for you.

The learning outcomes for this course, listed above, make it clear that the goals revolve around you, the student, in partnership with me, the professor, taking the initiative to learn. Technology can't do that for you.

Another Bottom Line (TRULY The Bottom Line): Do your own work. Produce something original.

I reserve the right to drop students with an F if they engage 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:

- The MSU Student Honor Creed, available online at [MSU Honor Creed](#).
- The 2026-2027 MSU Undergraduate Catalog, available online at [MSU Undergraduate Catalog](#).
- The 2026-2027 MSU Student Handbook, available online at [MSU Student Handbook](#)).

- Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities).

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand the seriousness of academic dishonesty and realize I will impose the harshest sanctions possible if I can prove you have engaged in academic dishonesty. You are also indicating that you understand what constitutes academic dishonesty; I will not tolerate the excuse that the student did not know he/she was engaging in academic dishonesty. You are also indicating that you have read and understand the MSU Student Honor Creed and the MSU Code of Student Conduct, and that you agree to abide by both.

Important Dates

See Course Schedule below.

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 as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments 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 me.

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University MSU Catalog. As professor of this course, I do request that you speak to me before filing an appeal in the hope that we can resolve the problem before it escalates to an appeal.

Additional Class Policies

Attitude/Class Participation

The success of this course will depend on students keeping up with the reading and discussing the topics at hand. As stated above, this isn't the type of course in which you memorize information, spit it back to me on an exam, and forget what you've learned as you walk out of the exam room. In any case, I find that students get a lot more out of a course when they are forced to think critically and to present their conclusions. Because this is an upper-level course, corresponding attitudes and work ethics are required. Although there is no set percentage for this component, it will play a big role if you are on the "borderline" at the end of the semester.

Related: The system is set up for your success, but it cannot guarantee your success. While I see the process as a professor-student collaboration/partnership, each student is expected to attend regularly, complete all of the assignments, put in the proper time and effort, and have a good attitude. If you don't commit to those expectations, you forfeit your right to be upset about any results.

If you cannot make it a priority to have a good attitude, please drop now so another student, who is more serious, can have your spot. See also the **Missed Assignments Policy**.

Technology/Devices

As related to attitude, cell. phones, pagers and other similar devices will not be tolerated. In my mind, they are a sign of a bad attitude. I will not tolerate annoying jingles and beeps. If you own such a device, turn it off (not on vibrate) or somehow make sure it doesn't make any noise while I am trying to conduct class. If your other commitments are so pressing that they can not wait until the end of the class session, it may be in your best interests to reconsider the priority you place on being here.

Sending and receiving text messages during class will not be tolerated. Unfortunately, laptop computers, iPhones, tablets and other similar equipment will not be allowed in class for note-taking. Although I realize this is a convenient way to take notes, past students have abused the privilege by using the equipment to surf the Internet, send e-mail, and look at their social media. I will not tolerate this kind of distraction. Learning requires concentration.

I will, however, allow the use of technology for legitimate class reasons only, and only with my express permission.

These policies apply to all devices, including smartwatches.

Recording

Recording classes is generally prohibited without the professor's explicit permission. Such recordings, when permitted, are for personal use only and may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published without the professor's prior consent. Some faculty may not permit recordings of their classes. When it is feasible and appropriate, students may record classes to accommodate disabilities under the Americans With Disabilities Act, with prior approval of Disability Support Services. If recording the class is necessary as part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, I must be informed as soon during the semester as possible. Such recordings may not be uploaded to the internet or otherwise shared, transmitted, or published.

In all cases, please note:

- I will inform the entire class, as a courtesy, that our discussions are being recorded. The person recording will not be identified.
- Any personal information offered by another student, any guests or the

professor is not to be used for purposes outside the normal realm of the education process. The person recording is not allowed to share such information with outsiders.

- I reserve the right to intervene if the process becomes too disruptive.

Why am I so adamant about technology? As a colleague once said, "Learning requires attention and focus." Despite the current generation's approaches to multi-tasking, my experience has been that the brain cannot perform two high-level functions at once, and multi-tasking is a myth. In addition, recent studies have shown that most people are not able to multi-task as effectively as they think they can. We can't learn, pay attention to class material, and monitor our text-messages effectively all at once. We also know that a student using/misusing a device can distract other students and maybe the entire class. While some students are willing to sacrifice their own opportunities to learn, and they often argue that their actions affect no one else, this simply is not true. You do not have the right to distract the class.

I reserve the right to ask you to leave immediately or to embarrass you mercilessly if your phones or other devices make noise during class or if I see you using a device when it has nothing to do with the in-class topic at hand. If cell. phones become more than a one-time problem, I reserve the right to lower your final semester grade and/or take further disciplinary actions.

Appropriate Conduct

Appropriate conduct – in the classroom, with the instructor and in any other class-related situations – is required at all times. The instructor has the right to remove disruptive, disrespectful students (or students creating any other kinds of problems) from the classroom and take other disciplinary actions as necessary. In addition, students are expressly prohibited from attending class or class-related activities, including visits to the professor's office, while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs. Please see information under the Alcohol and Drug Policy below.

No food or beverages are allowed beyond water, or if allowed in the specific classroom, other non-alcoholic drinks. Past students have brought fast food, breakfast and salads to class, and this is not appropriate.

Civility

I encourage the classroom to be a debate zone, not a lecture zone. I have found that far more learning takes place when students hear each others' arguments and decide for themselves than when I deliver lectures. Toward that end, civility is required at all times. Criticizing a person's viewpoint, in a civil way, is allowed; personal attacks are not.

Also toward that end, please be advised that others' views may be in direct contrast to your own. Considering others' views, while possibly rejecting them in the end, is what allows us all to grow. Do not expect to be immune from ideas that

may not align with your own.

Please see also the Content Advisory section below.

I reserve the right to drop students with an F if they engage in disruptive behavior, have a poor attitude, or in any other way are clearly not taking the class seriously.

By accepting this syllabus and remaining enrolled in this course, you are indicating that you understand my expectations for students concerning attitude and work ethic.

Proper Communication with Me

Unlike some faculty, I do not generally give my cell. phone number to students. However, I am in my office far more than just during office hours, and I have an open-door policy (if I am in the office, the door is almost always open, unless I am discussing something of a private nature). If someone is already in my office when you arrive, please wait in the hall or work-café (i.e., don't hover in the doorway and don't interrupt unless it is truly an emergency). I try to return phone calls and respond to e-mails quickly.

E-Mail: Please observe proper grammar and other rules of etiquette in your e-mails (e.g., "Hello Dr. Sernoe" is a far more professional greeting than "Hey!" or, worse, no greeting at all) (in fact, greeting me as "Sernoe" is also inappropriate). Please remember this not a DM 2 ur friends 😊 – you are sending a professor an e-mail. There's a difference. Please note also that I am not attached to devices 24/7. I generally do not look at e-mail after 6 p.m. or before 7 a.m. If you e-mail me at 1 a.m. or on the weekend with a question, do not expect an immediate answer.

Effective Jan. 1, 2024, university policy mandates that faculty and staff conduct all official business using their MSU e-mails. It further requires that we e-mail with students only via their official MSU e-mail. Please be advised that if you contact me using your personal e-mail address, I will respond by asking you to switch to your MSU e-mail. I realize this may require some of you to check an e-mail you normally do not check, but in order to comply with policy, I am requiring you to do so. This e-mail address is provided to you as part of your enrollment at the university.

Content Advisory

Please be advised that we will study cases that in their day led to considerable controversy and in some instances remain controversial (because of the content of the expressions and/or because of the ruling[s]). We will cover cases involving types of expression that are provocative and might be disturbing (after all, let's be honest: the First Amendment is rarely invoked when no one takes offense to some type of expression). While I will always give fair warning, and anyone is free to

step out of the room if the material is upsetting, I will not shy away from covering the most important cases in First Amendment jurisprudence. It would be a disservice to you if I did.

The First Amendment in and of itself has also always led to considerable disagreement: Which kinds of expression should be protected? Which should not? We as a society have never been able to agree. The First Amendment has protected what some consider outrageous and has not protected what some consider perfectly valid.

As noted above with others' ideas, your views of these specifics of the legal world may not align with court rulings, nor with your colleagues' views.

A Reminder Regarding The Portfolio Requirement

Please note that all mass communication majors are required to submit a portfolio during their Internship course (please note that 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. Students are required to demonstrate communication competence through the written word and visual communication; two examples of each competency are required for the portfolio.

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 or any mass communication faculty member for handouts with more information ("Mass Communication Portfolio Competencies" and "Mass Communication Portfolio FAQ").

Change of Student 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 ([Registrar and Schedule Homepage](#)).

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. Please note that two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. Further information is available here: [Registrar and Schedule Homepage](#)

Services for Students with Disabilities or Other Challenging Circumstances

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. Students requiring accommodations should contact Disability Support Services, located in the Student Wellness Center, (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 [Disability Support Services](#).

Students with disabilities or who are in need of special arrangements should see me as early as possible in the semester. I cannot help you if you come to me at the last minute. Please note also that accommodations become effective only at such time as I receive documentation from the DSS office; they are not retroactive. I will do what I can within reason to accommodate your needs, but federal law requires me to remain fair to all students.

If you have specific medical information that needs sharing or you need specific accommodations in case of emergencies or emergency evacuations, please see me as soon as possible.

If you have outside circumstances that may affect your performance in this class – including but not limited to food insecurity, inadequate housing, family issues, financial issues or health challenges – please contact me if you are comfortable doing so. I may be able to refer you to on-campus resources that will help you address the situation.

Further information is available through the following links:

[Student Emergency Support and Resources](#)

[Student Emergency Fund](#)

[Canan Food Security Program](#)

[Counseling Services](#)

[Personal Financial Support](#)

You may also qualify for scholarships administered by my office and the office of the Dean of the Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts. Please contact me for further information.

Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.

If you are uncomfortable discussing personal information with me but need a referral or specific resources, please consider contacting the Dean of Students Office at 940-397-7500 or student.affairs@mstuexas.edu. The office is located in Clark Student Center.

MSU University Policies

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.

One possible exception is information for parents or emergency contacts that is determined on a need-to-know basis.

Related: Due to security and confidentiality concerns, I generally do not discuss grades and other sensitive information over e-mail.

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 that prohibit 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.

As stated above, students are expressly prohibited from attending class or class-related activities, including visits to the professor's office, while under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs.

Please be advised that any violations of the law, of MSU policy or class policy will be reported immediately.

Further information is available through the following links:

[Policy and Procedure Manual Online](#)

[MSU Student Handbook](#)

[Smoking/Tobacco Policy](#)

University policy strictly prohibits the use of tobacco products in any building owned or operated by MSU.

[Campus Carry Rules/Policies](#)

Effective August 1, 2016, the Campus Carry law (Senate Bill 11) allows those licensed individuals to carry a concealed handgun in buildings on public university campuses, except in locations the University establishes as prohibited. The Constitutional Carry law does not change this process. Concealed carry still requires a License to Carry permit, and openly carrying handguns is not allowed on college campuses. For more information, visit [Campus Carry Rules and Policies](#).

Please be advised that any violations of the law will be reported immediately.

[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 the 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 "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be accessed via the MSU Police Department's webpage at ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

[Other Safety Concerns](#)

Please be advised that I make it a point to review safety procedures during the first week of class, to include active shooter and weather-related situations.

I will also provide students with a handout called Emergency Preparedness Information. This information will be posted to the class D2L page as well.

You are urged to download the MSU Safety App and to join the MSU Emergency Alert system. Information about these services can be found at [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#).

Some Advice

- Attend regularly. This point cannot be stressed enough.
- Thoroughly understand all grading policies.
- Attend regularly. This point cannot be stressed enough.
- Note the Missed Assignments Policy and know that it is enforced.
- Attend regularly. This point cannot be stressed enough.
- Note the Academic Dishonesty Policy and know that it is enforced.
- Attend regularly. This point cannot be stressed enough.
- Note the Privacy Policy and know that it is followed.
- Attend regularly. This point cannot be stressed enough.
- If anything in this syllabus is unclear or if you have questions as the course progresses, ask!
- Attend regularly. This point cannot be stressed enough.

Course Schedule

Notice: Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

This course will be run as a seminar, with the expectations that students will arrive for class prepared and that the course will proceed with far more discussion than lecture. Some straight lecture will be necessary, but I don't want the course to proceed solely on my lectures. The success of this format depends on your willingness to actively participate in class discussions and other activities. If this approach doesn't work, I will be forced to lecture for the entire time.

This is the tentative course 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 – on top of the uncertainty with the current state of the world – this schedule is likely to change. I reserve the right to change the class schedule if circumstances make it necessary.

Please note also that campus closures due to bad weather and other situations can cause schedule changes. If campus is closed on a class day, I will do my best to e-mail the class early in the day with instructions regarding next steps. You are required to check your MSU e-mail during this time. I will also post notices on our class D2L page. Once we reconvene in-person, I will provide further information, if needed, regarding schedule changes.

Again, I suggest joining the MSU Emergency Alert system. Information can be found at [Safety / Emergency Procedures](#).

Chances are good that you will receive at least one additional revised schedule before the semester is over. If reading assignments or deadlines change, I will tell you well in advance. Please note that the reading and general workloads vary considerably from week to week.

It is imperative that you complete the readings before we begin discussing each unit.

Statements Related to the Current Health Situation: During the height of the covid pandemic, I developed several paragraphs of information concerning what could happen if the disease were to once again disrupt the world. I have retained a copy and will provide this information to any student who requests it.

I am looking forward to a great semester with all of you.

Dates	Topic(s)	Reading
8/25	Section 1: • Introduction; the Court System • Legal Concepts • Legal vs. Ethical	Handouts
8/27, 4 p.m.	Last Day To Add A Class	N/A
8/27 – 9/3	Continue On Section 1	Handouts
9/8 – 9/22	Section 2: Free Expression, Free Speech, Free Press and the First Amendment	Handouts
9/24 – 10/6	Section 3: • Censorship and Prior Restraint • National Security and Political Ideas • Order In The Streets/Safety/ Time-Place-Manner Restrictions • Schools	Handouts
10/6	Moot Court Instructions	Handout
10/8 – 10/27	Continue On Section 3 But Also Note: • Moot Court Group 1: Case Distribution – Thurs., Oct. 15 • Moot Court Group 2: Case Distribution – Thurs., Oct. 22	Handouts
10/29	Moot Court Group 1: Hearing	
11/3	Continue On Section 3	Handouts

Dates	Topic(s)	Reading
11/5	Moot Court Group 2: Hearing	
11/10 – 11/17	Continue On Section 3	Handouts
11/17	Final Project Options Form	
11/19	Continue On Section 3	Handouts
11/19	Final Project Options Due	
11/23, 4 p.m.	Last Day To Drop With A W	N/A
11/24	Final Essay Questions/Final Moot Court Case Distribution (Subject To Change Based On Students' Final Project Choices)	Handout
11/25 – 11/27	Thanksgiving Break – Classes Canceled	N/A
12/1 – 12/3	Finish Section 4	Handouts
12/3	Final Project Due/Final Moot Court Hearing, 9:30 a.m. (Subject To Change Based On Students' Final Project Choices)	N/A
12/8	Final Exam Session, 8-10 a.m.	N/A