



## **Course Syllabus: Introduction to Mass Communication**

Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts

MCOM 1233 Section 170

Fall 2021 Wednesday 5:00-7:30 FFA-D202

### **Contact Information**

**Instructor:** Crystal Tate, MA

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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.

### **Course Objectives**

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.

### **Textbook & Instructional Materials**

- Textbook: *Mass Communication: Living in a Media World*, 7th edition, by Ralph Hanson

- An internet connection (we will use Desire2Learn for this class)

### **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

### **Drop policy**

Dropping this course could have *significant* impact on your student record and financial aid. It is also recommended, prior to dropping, you consult with the Financial Aid Office.

### **Grading**

Final grades will be based on a personal journal, a final exam, smaller assignments and quizzes, 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.

Final grades will be based on the following.

Assignments	Percent
Journal	40%
Quizzes	35%
Final exam	20%
Professionalism	5%
Total Points	100%

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. Your participation grade will reflect online and in class participation.

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 text me 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 one absence**. 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 10 entries relating to the mass media. You are required to work on this assignments throughout the semester. **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. The plan is for 15 quizzes. I will drop the lowest two quiz grades.

### **Final Exam**

**Final exam is open on Monday, November 23<sup>rd</sup> and be due Wednesday, December 8<sup>th</sup>. Plan ahead. There will be no extensions!**

### **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<sup>1</sup>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 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.
- "If you promise that you will not halt your class participation to read your email, text with a friend, post to your Facebook wall... I promise that I will not halt my class participation to read my email, text with a friend, or post to my Facebook wall." (from [oh\\_richard](#) on chronicle.com)
- 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-2020-2021](#). 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 E 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-plagiator. 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](#).

### **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.

### **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 [Disability Support Services](#).

### **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 Liz Minden, who shared ideas and assignments.*