

# MCOM 4193 – Yearbook Practicum

Spring 2023 – 3 credits

Monday – 3-5:50 p.m.

Dr. Jim Sernoe

Prof. Jason Byas

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## Office Hours:

Monday, Wednesday, Friday – 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Tuesday, Thursday – 9:30-11 a.m.

Also by appointment

## Course Objectives/Description

- Students will obtain practical experience working for the student media.
- Students will improve the skills in their chosen areas, such as, but not limited to, writing/reporting, editing, photography, graphic design and advertising/sales/marketing/promotion.

## Prerequisites

- Consent of instructor and department chair.

## Reading

- No required textbooks or reading.

## Grading

An on-site practicum is not like other courses in which there are set meeting times. The Mass Communication Department considers the practicum a form of employment, and as such, students are expected to conduct themselves as employees with little faculty oversight. This means it is up to you to attend regularly, arrive on time, dress appropriately, conduct yourself professionally (this means, among other expectations, that you will not send and receive personal calls, text messages or e-mails while officially on duty), meet deadlines, and participate as a team member, among other responsibilities. As I will not be there day to day to make sure these responsibilities are met – as I would be in a traditional course – I rely on students to behave as adults. I also rely on reports from your supervisor. More information on professional expectations is included below.

You are expected to communicate with me and/or your supervisor about any problems that occur during the semester.

Final grades will be based on quality of work, quantity of work, student's dependability and weekly logs. Students will sign a contract stating what, exactly, all parties involved have agreed to. A blank copy of the contract is at the end of this document.

Logs are to be kept daily and submitted weekly. Logs must detail what you worked on and your assessment of your performance. Grades will be based on timely submission as well as quality. Do not submit several weeks' worth of logs at the end of the semester. Logs must be written using standard grammar, spelling and punctuation (in other words, don't send logs written as if u r sending a txt-msg ☹ ). Handwritten logs will not be accepted. If your logs fail to follow these guidelines, you will be asked to revise and resubmit.

### Example of Weekly Log

Monday, January 20, 2022

I arrived at 11 a.m. and met with the editor Sally, who reviewed my photos from the basketball game. She said most of the photos were usable but not very exciting. She suggested that I try to get more action shots and a few crowd shots. I am going to go to the game next Tuesday night and will remember those tips. I was also concerned about the lighting and how that would affect the photos, but Sally said she thought they looked good.

Please note that you must write an entry for each day you work at your practicum. You may submit your logs via e-mail, fax (940-397-4909) or mail; or you may put them in my mailbox in the department office. I will verify that I have received your logs.

Please note that there is no provision for late work. If you have a legitimate excuse for missing deadline, please contact me.

If you produce any materials for the organization (e.g., articles, media releases, videos, photos, web sites, social media posts), samples must be submitted before final deadline.

Around halfway through the semester, I will contact your supervisor for a midterm report on your progress.

You are required to remember that you are representing the department and the university during your practicum. As such, you are expected to conduct yourself in ways that will not bring embarrassment to the department or university.

If you cannot make it a priority to behave responsibly and professionally, please drop now. If you cannot make it a priority to represent the department and the university in ways that will keep our reputation intact, please drop now.

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.

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 Alcohol and Drugs below.

No food and 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.

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. 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.

I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she has excessive absences or missed assignments, engages in disruptive behavior, has a poor attitude, or in any other way is 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 attendance, attitude and work ethic.

In order to help students keep track of their progress toward course objectives, the instructor is required to provide a Midterm Progress Report through each student's WebWorld account. 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.

### Statements Related to the Current COVID-19 Situation

- It is my sincere hope that we are able to finish the semester in the in-person classroom setting.
- Given the state of the world, everything in this course could change with very little notice. That means deadlines, projects, even weighted

percentages for each component of the course could change. Please note that I will consult with the class and use students' input to the extent practicable in making decisions about how to proceed. Students should not hesitate to contact me with questions, concerns and, even better, great suggestions. Most students know I will go out of my way to be fair to all.

- Safety and health of all are our top considerations. You are required to follow all best practices as they are developed during this crisis. If you feel sick, do not come to class. If you need to miss class, contact me as outlined under class procedures, and I will work with you.
- All class sessions will be available on Zoom. Those who stay home due to illness but feel well enough to attend through Zoom are welcome to do so. Please send me an e-mail in advance so I can open the meeting.
  - Related: The fact that a Zoom meeting is available does NOT constitute an invitation to miss an in-person class session. I strongly believe that the best learning takes place in a face-to-face setting. Please do not attend on Zoom simply because you do not feel like attending in-person.
- Masks cannot be mandated in classrooms, per the governor's misguided order. However, science has informed the world that it is a best practice. As a result, I am highly suggesting that you wear a mask. University administration has also made the wearing of a mask a strong suggestion, especially for those who are not vaccinated. I will wear a mask as I exit and enter the classroom, as well as when I am within 6 feet of another person. As the instructor's podium is at least 10 feet from the closest student, I will usually take my mask off when I speak. However, if any student is uncomfortable with this decision, they are urged to contact me to discuss privately. Please see the university's official policy at the web site listed below.
- Similarly, vaccines cannot be mandated, per the governor's misguided order. However, science has informed the world – and continuous data collection shows – that it is a best practice. As a result, I am highly suggesting that you obtain a vaccination. I have done so, not only to protect myself but also to help contain the disease. University administration has also made obtaining a vaccination a strong suggestion. Please see the university's official policy at the web site listed below.
- Similarly, social distancing cannot be mandated. Again, however, I strongly suggest seating yourselves accordingly to the extent possible. Please see the university's official policy at the web site listed below.
- The Mass Comm. Dept. and the College of Fine Arts have adopted specific cleaning protocols, and all students are required to abide by these rules. Students who are unwilling to do their share to ensure everyone's health will be contacted by the professor. In short, you will be required to clean your area before and after class, the first as a safety precaution for yourself, the second as a courtesy toward others. We realize this means some areas may be cleaned twice within a brief time period, but this is

better than not at all. This rule holds for traditional classrooms, labs, editing equipment, the newsroom and public areas such as the work-café.

- All handouts and other information will be available through the university's D2L system, and D2L's Gradebook function will be enabled (I will, nonetheless, keep my own spreadsheet with grades, and students are welcome to contact me for grade updates). Students are expected to understand how to navigate D2L, even if we continue with in-person classes.
  - If you do experience problems with D2L, please let me know as soon as possible. In addition, the D2L page has a "Report A Problem" function on the top navigation bar as well as a FAQ function in the middle of the page on the right.
- Related: All handouts will be available in hard copy and will be passed out in class. If you are uncomfortable with this and would like digital copies only, please inform me privately.
- If we are forced to switch to online-only instruction, all students will be required to:
  - Attend class at the assigned time. I will offer to record the sessions but these recordings are supplemental and not replacements for attending at the assigned times. Excuses such as work will not be accepted, and students will be expected to make arrangements to attend every session. Students are also required to attend for the full class session.
    - The same provisions regarding attendance for in-person classes will be in effect if we move to a virtual classroom.
  - Have a computer with a webcam that can accommodate Zoom or other video software.
  - Have reliable WiFi.
    - As to the three requirements above, I know not all students have access to a reliable computer and reliable WiFi. However, you are expected to make arrangements in advance and have a plan. Do not assume you will be able to complete the course using only your phone and/or without attending actual classes during class time. If these requirements present problems for you, please contact me as early in the semester as possible. I will work with students in the hope that they do not have to drop the class as a result of these requirements.
  - Observe proper video meeting etiquette:
    - Arrive on time.
    - Leave your camera on. I realize not all students are comfortable with having their cameras on, but it will be a requirement. Not having the ability to look at you in-person to make sure you are paying attention and understanding what is being discussed, I will need to see you on camera (see next bullet point as well).

- Pay attention. Devices such as phones will be prohibited, as they are in face-to-face classes. Students who are e-mailing or attending to other tasks while on screen will be reminded of this policy. Continued violations could result in a student facing disciplinary sanctions up to being dropped from the course with an F.
  - Set the mute function as the default. As stated above, discussion is encouraged, both in-person and in video meetings, but we do not need to hear barking dogs, ringing phones, roommates, etc.
  - Use the raise-your-hand function.
  - Wear proper clothing. I have heard stories of students sitting in on video meetings with no shirt and in bikinis. This is not appropriate and will not be tolerated.
  - Avoid eating while on camera. As in a face-to-face classroom, you are expected to eat your meals while not in class.
  - Have a proper background.
  - Stay seated. Do not wander around. It will distract the rest of us and make us dizzy.
  - Do not plan to connect to Zoom while you are driving. This is obviously unsafe, as well as a poor atmosphere for learning.
- Use D2L effectively. As stated above, all syllabi, instructions for assignments/projects and other materials will be posted on the class D2L page. If we are forced to go to an online-only set-up, discussion posts may be required and assignments may have to be submitted through D2L.
- Communicate with me. It is well-known among faculty and students that I do not share my cell. phone number publicly, as some other faculty do. As a result, I do quite a bit of communicating through e-mail, especially if I won't be in my office. My office phone will be forwarded to my cell. phone, but students will still be expected to check their e-mail regularly. I will also make every effort to meet with individual students by Zoom or other video platforms.
  - Related: if adjustments to the normal office hours routine are necessary, I will communicate them to you.
- If we are forced to switch to online-only instruction, deadlines, assignments and other course elements may change (see also info. above). I will provide clear revisions, in writing, and will address any questions/concerns by phone, e-mail or in a video platform.
- Please note that the federal government, state government, various local government units (city, county, health district, etc.) and the university administration have the power to issue declarations that can directly affect how we navigate. Please be flexible and we will get through these extraordinary times as a team.
- Related: these governmental bodies have varying powers and can change the guidelines and mandates with very little notice. Please be flexible.

- Students are encouraged to visit the web page developed by the university in response to this crisis:
  - [MSU Coronavirus Update Page](#)
- I reserve the right to drop any student with an F if he/she violates any of these policies. At the same time, I will work with all students to my fullest ability to ensure a worthwhile educational experience.

## Ethics

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 the recent 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 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 also realize the Internet provides a convenient source of information, but students need to be aware that proper citation will be required.

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.

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:

- The MSU Student Honor Creed, available online at [MSU Honor Creed](#).
- The 2022-2023 MSU Undergraduate Catalog, available online at [MSU Undergraduate Catalog](#).
- The 2022-2023 MSU Student Handbook (the handbook is also available online at [MSU Student Handbook](#)).

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.

## 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 Drugs

Midwestern State University has developed a drug and alcohol prevention program in accordance with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act of 1989. 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:

<https://public.powerdms.com/MidwesternState/tree/documents/2223833>

<https://msutexas.edu/student-life/assets/files/handbook.pdf>

## Campus Carry

Senate Bill 11 passed by the 84<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature allows licensed handgun holders to carry concealed handguns on campus, effective Aug. 1, 2016. Areas excluded from concealed carry are appropriately marked, in accordance with state law. For more information regarding campus carry, please refer to the University's webpage at [Campus Carry »MSU Texas »](#).

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 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."](#)

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.

## Special Accommodations/Emergencies/Outside Difficulties

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. I will do what I can within reason to accommodate your needs, but federal law requires me to remain fair to all students. Please note that in order to qualify for consideration of special accommodations, you must be registered with the MSU Office of Disability Support Services, and I must have a memo on file from that office, along with the Special Accommodations Request form.

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 – 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.

## 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”). These handouts are also available at:

[Portfolio Documents](#)

[Portfolio FAQ](#)

[Portfolio Rubric](#)

[Documentary Rubric](#)



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**PRACTICUM/INDEPENDENT STUDY AGREEMENT**

**Dr. Jim Sernoe**  
**Practicum Coordinator**  
**E-Mail: [jim.sernoe@msutexas.edu](mailto:jim.sernoe@msutexas.edu)**  
**Phone: 940-397-4391**  
**Office: D204 Fain Fine Arts Center**

**Course in which I am enrolled:**

\_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4171      \_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4172      \_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4173  
\_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4183  
\_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4193  
\_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4263      \_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4363      \_\_\_\_\_ MCOM 4463

**Other:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Semester:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location of Practicum and Duties**

**Expected Hours/Schedule**

**Dress Code**

## Cell. Phone Policy

### Student's Obligations

- Students must turn in weekly logs of daily duties and any work that is produced. Each day worked must be documented. Logs may be submitted by e-mail, postal mail, or in-person. **Logs must be turned in each week as the semester progresses**, unless other arrangements have been made with the professor. Handwritten logs will not be accepted.
- Students who produce any materials for the organization (e.g., articles, press releases, designs, recordings, video, podcasts) must submit samples with their logs.
- Students are required to remember that they are representing the department and the university during their practicum. As such, they are expected to behave in ways that will not bring embarrassment to the department or university. Professional conduct at all times is required.
- Related: students who agree to a project, deadline or any other arrangement, then find they are unable to complete the requirements, are required to communicate clearly and in a timely manner not only with colleagues at the organization, but also any professor who may be involved.
- Students understand that while mistakes may happen, they are still accountable to the organization.
- Students understand that the supervisor (e.g., student editor, another faculty member) and course instructor will be in contact during the term of the internship.

Student understands that \_\_\_\_\_ is the instructor of record for the course,

but \_\_\_\_\_ will determine the final grade.

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**Student Signature**

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**Student's Phone Number**

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**Student's E-mail Address**