



Course Syllabus: Publication Design

College of Fine Arts
MCOM 3253 Section 201
Spring 2026 | M/W 11 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.

Contact Information

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Office hours: Mon. & Wed. 2:30-4 | Tues. & Thurs. 2:30-3:30

*and by appointment—just ask and we will find a time that works for you!
and by "stopping by"—I am in my office a lot!*

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- NOTE: If you make the email subject line look like this:
PUBLICATION DESIGN: Subject of Message
it will be easier for me to see the email sooner and get back to you sooner.
Here is an example email subject line:
PUBLICATION DESIGN: Practice question
or even
PUBLICATION DESIGN: PRACTICE QUESTION
- Please do not forget to include your name in the body of the email so that I know who the email is from.

Course Description

Prerequisite: Sophomore standing

No previous technical knowledge is presumed.

We will learn and practice the use of layout and design principles to create eye-appealing and readable publications. Theoretical and practical applications of presentation and packaging skills for publications are incorporated into the course.

After successfully completing this course, you should be able to:

- Understand, identify, and apply basic publication design principles
- Understand and use basic publication design terminology
- Comprehend the basic design process
- Identify basic problem-solving requirements and client objectives

- Appreciate the role of your creativity in solving design problems
- Develop your own visual esthetic and style
- Understand the importance of “detail” in publication design
- Combine type and image for effective page layouts
- Evaluate publications with a critical eye for design

We will utilize attention, flexibility, experimentation, and critical thinking, abilities that will serve you well beyond this class.

The knowledge, attitudes, and skills you gain by successfully completing this course can help you in almost any career. Becoming a life-long learner and analyzing information you receive will be essential to your success as a professional and can also greatly impact your personal life and your life as a citizen of the world.

Required Textbook

Graphic Design Portfolio 2025: InDesign, Illustrator and Photoshop. By Against the Clock.

MSU Texas Core Values

In this class we will strive to uphold the same shared core values that unite all Midwestern State University faculty, staff, and students:

- Engage others with respect, empathy, and joy (people-centered)
- Cultivating a welcoming and belonging campus environment (community)
- Always do the right thing (integrity)
- Adopte innovative ideas to pioneer new paths (visionary)
- Value relationships with broader communities (connections)

See the [Values Journey web page](#) for more details.

We are all responsible to ensure the classroom is a safe environment. This includes not posting classroom activities or materials to social media without the consent of everyone involved.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual’s to whom credit is given). **Generative AI will be permitted only in very specific situations that will be explained clearly in**

those situations. Using Generative AI beyond these permissions will result in a 0 for that submission. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the [Office of Student Conduct](#).

Class Policies

The most important policy for this course is a respect for this learning community. One of the challenges and opportunities of college comes from talking and listening to people with different experiences and perspectives, and our class meetings will regularly include conversation and collaboration. As for cell phones and laptops, we need to use them as tools not allow them to distract us. ALL OF US will put away our phones during class unless we have a specific reason for them to be out. As for laptops, you won't need one for class, and if it will tempt you to turn your attention away from our 80 minutes together, I strongly encourage you to leave it closed as well.

Grading

Table 1: Percent allocation

Assignments	Percent
Projects	40
Assignments and quizzes	50
Professionalism/Community	10
Total Percent	100

Table 2: Grading scale.

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

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, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact me.

Attendance

It is important that you attend class and arrive on time. If you have a total of more than three weeks worth (6 classes) of absences (excused or not), you will

need to drop the course, as you likely will not be able to keep up with the course requirements and, more importantly, learn what you need to learn! Students who miss class miss out on opportunities for participation and explanations of assignments that could impact the final grade. **You are responsible for all material presented in every class period, whether present or not.** If you need to miss several classes because of personal reasons, you should alert the Dean of Students office and provide them with the necessary documentation so that they can verify the situation for all of your instructors.

Community Expectations

Building Our Learning Community

This course will be a cooperative learning experience. You and your work are, in a very real sense, the primary texts for this course. In order for us to work together as a community, we all have to come prepared to participate.

Our class meetings will include activities; they will not be straight lecture. The activities are designed to be interesting and to help you learn. **These activities will often have a credit/grade component to them. Therefore, your attendance and active participation will affect how much you learn and how well you do in the course.**

What Community Looks Like

- Show up consistently - your presence matters to everyone's learning. Punctuality helps us make the most of our class time together and shows respect for our learning community. Being late or leaving early can disrupt learning activities. Full attendance is expected and includes arriving on time and not leaving early.
- Support classmates actively - share resources, offer help, celebrate successes AND failures.
- Engage authentically - ask real questions, share genuine struggles, offer honest feedback.
- Embrace productive failure - yours and others' - as learning opportunities.
- Contribute to our shared knowledge - what you discover benefits everyone.

Participation

Participation isn't just talking in class. It includes:

- Sharing useful resources you discover
- Giving thoughtful feedback
- Being fully present (e.g., not on your electronic devices unless it is for a specific learning activity in class)
- Contributing to our online community space
- Helping troubleshoot technical problems
- What else can we add to this list?

Professionalism

You are in this class to prepare for the professional world. Treat this class like the professional world. Build habits that will support your professional success!

For example, in the professional world, you do not pull out your phone for non-meeting activities (e.g., texting friends, getting on social media, etc.). If you do, there are consequences. Some of those consequences may be explicit and obvious. Others may not be obvious but can still be significant. The same goes for this course.

You are expected to respect yourself and your learning community by:

- behaving professionally
- arriving on time
- being prepared
- paying attention
- actively participating
- staying for the full class
- treating others with courtesy and respect
- using language thoughtfully

Build habits that will support your professional success; don't build habits that will get in the way of your professional success.

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, the mass communication capstone project course). The portfolio requirement is a part of MSU's reaccreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The portfolio helps you 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.

Campus Closures

If campus is closed due to weather or other situations on a class day, our class will not meet.

Computer Requirements

Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings. Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. For more information, visit [MSU Computer Labs](#). For additional help, log into [D2L](#).

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.

Change of Schedule

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

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. **HOWEVER**, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. Two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund.

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 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](#).

Managing Stress

You 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.

An important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

There are numerous campus resources available to you including:

- [Psychology Clinic](#) (940-397-4791 or psychology.clinic@msutexas.edu)
- [MSU Counseling Center](#) (940-397-4618)
- [Student Wellness Center](#) (940-397-4206)
- [Online resources](#)
- [Self-help apps](#)
- [Additional mental-health resources](#)

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 at 1-800-621-8504.

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, and 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. Examples include:

- [Canan Food Security Program](#) (provides meal swipes for the dining hall)
- [Mustangs Pantry](#) (non-perishable food and hygiene items)
- [Student Emergency Fund](#) (financial assistance with urgent expenses)

Please note that all information provided to me remains confidential.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

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

Smoking/Tobacco Policy

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

Alcohol and Drug Policy

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

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 [MSUREady – Active Shooter](#). Students are encouraged to watch the video entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: ["Run. Hide. Fight."](#)

Grade Appeal Process

If you disagree with a grade earned on a specific assignment, schedule an appointment to meet with me. Students who wish to appeal a final course grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#).

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

In Closing

This course is designed to be manageable and sustainable for everyone. Clear expectations and strong peer support systems are here to help you succeed. Built in accountability includes:

- Regular reflection prompts (ongoing throughout the semester)
- Peer support (ongoing throughout semester)
- Regular small deliverables (preventing procrastination)
- What else can we build in to help you?

This syllabus and schedule may evolve based on our collective learning needs.

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

Topics/Tentative Schedule

This will very likely evolve based on our collective needs and discoveries.

Week 1: Learning community, design studio, getting started

Week 2: Audience, communication goals, publication types

Week 3: Adobe interface, letterhead design

Week 4: Letterhead design

Weeks 5, 6: Portfolio builder project or create your own project

Week 7: Share and critique projects

Week 8: Spring Break

Weeks 9, 10: Newsletter design

Weeks 11, 12: Portfolio builder project or create your own project

Weeks 13, 14: Class choice design

Week 15: Portfolio builder project or create your own project

Week 16: Share and critique projects