



Midwestern State University
MASS COMMUNICATION
SENIOR PRODUCTION – MCOM 4243
Fall 2025: FA D101, TR 12:30PM - 1:50PM

Contact Information

Instructor: Jonathon Quam
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Course Description

Course Identification

This capstone course introduces students to the art and practice of documentary filmmaking, bringing together the knowledge and skills they've developed throughout their Mass Communication studies at MSU Texas.

Productions

Working in teams, students will produce a 12–15 minute short-form documentary. The project will draw on every stage of the process—preproduction research, proposal writing, interviews, lighting, observational shooting, and editing—culminating in a complete, well-researched, and technically proficient narrative.

In addition to production, student teams will take on the responsibilities of outreach and promotion, including public engagement and media interviews.

- Students will produce an original documentary between 12 and 15 minutes in length.
- Students will examine ethical, legal, organizational and other aspects of the mass communication world.
- Students will improve their written, oral and visual communication skills.

Prerequisites

- Mass Communication Major
- Completion of MCOM 1243 – Media Writing
- Completion of MCOM 3613 – Field and Studio Production
- Completion of MCOM 4183 – Internship
- Senior Standing

- Consent of Instructor
- Consent of Department Chair

Required Text: Documentary Filmmaking: A Contemporary Field Guide (2nd Ed.), John Hewitt & Gustavo Vazquez, 2013

Required Purchase: Class 10/UHS-I or UHS-II SD Card (32, 64 or 128Gb)

Link: <https://tinyurl.com/mph762vn>

Recommended Purchase: 1TB External Hard Drive – Samsung, WD, G-Drive

Grading: Although the largest portion of your grade is determined by the final documentary, missing one deadline results in losing that portion of the grade.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook 2017-18](#)

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Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Plagiarism: Academic dishonesty includes both cheating and plagiarism. Cheating includes but is not limited to (1) using or attempting to use unauthorized materials to aid in achieving a better grade on a component of a class; (2) the falsification or invention of any information, including citations, on an assigned exercise; and/or (3) helping or attempting to help another in an act of cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is presenting the words or ideas of another person as if they were your own. Examples of plagiarism are (1) submitting an assignment as if it were one's own work when, in fact, it is at least partly the work of another; (2) submitting a work that has been purchased or otherwise obtained from an Internet source or another source; and (3) incorporating the words or ideas of an author into one's paper without giving the author due credit. Any writing that is not the work of you or your group members is plagiarism. Students in this course are expected to adhere to the MSU Student Honor Code.

AI Statement: Welcome to the wide world of new programs that can "do your writing for you". Why did I put that into quotes? Because some of the writing is problematic and a lot of it is downright bland. Having said that, I accept that this is yet another way to get around doing your own work, if that is the choice being made. But maybe it can be used for good, and that is where we are right now. In the "what if" and "how to" zone. We might have assignments that use or integrate AI writing this semester. There might be other places where it simply

isn't appropriate for the assignment. Perhaps AI can be a helpful tool, and that is part of what we can explore this semester. With that in mind, if you are found to have used AI writing programs in a place where they are not explicitly allowed on an assignment, you will receive a '0' grade, be reported for academic dishonesty, and will not have the chance to re-do or replace that assignment. I'd prefer that we see this as a chance to learn and adapt rather than just another way to cheat, so we'll approach it from that angle and see where we end up. I look forward to entering this newish universe with you.

Grading

Although the largest portion of your grade is determined by the final documentary, missing one deadline results in losing that portion of the grade. [Click here to enter text.](#)

Location Strike: Whenever an outside production is required; it will be the responsibility of all in the class to transport all needed gear to and from the location in a safe and timely manner. All items must be stored properly and returned in working order. If there is an issue with damage or malfunctioning equipment a proper report must be logged before you go out on location.

Assignments	Percentage
Final Documentary	50
Deadlines	25
Weekly Reports/Conferences	5
Smaller Assignments/Projects	10
Participation/Cooperation	10

Documentary screenings will be Friday Dec. 10 @ 3pm. Procedures are still being decided on.

Course Activities: This class will consist of lectures, in and out of class screenings, and audio/video projects.

Course Materials and Readings: In addition to the recommended chapters in the text, a number of current articles will be distributed, usually via D2L (these will be required readings).

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive 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 your instructor.

Attendance is a graded component because perfect attendance is expected and required. Projects of this scale demand full commitment, and I will go to great lengths to ensure everyone is present (see note above regarding quizzes). If you must miss a class or deadline, you are required to contact me **in advance**. Doing so does not automatically excuse the absence, but it is far preferable to explaining afterward. Failure to contact me before the next class will make excusing the absence unlikely.

Excused absences do not include work conflicts, non-emergency medical or dental appointments, hangovers, intramural games, visitors, fixing roommates' computers, fraternity/sorority events, relationship issues, or studying for other classes. Please see the Missed Assignments Policy for further detail.

Absences for religious holidays or university-sponsored events (such as field trips or athletics) must be arranged with me as early as possible. For university events, you are required to submit an official form and complete all assigned work by the original due date.

As some of my colleagues will say: in the real world, you can't do your job if you don't show up. Employers don't tolerate weak excuses, and employees who rely on them often find themselves unemployed. The same principle applies here. If you cannot make attendance a priority, I encourage you to drop now so another student who is committed can take your place.

Withheld Grades/Semester Grades Policy: Ordinarily, at the discretion of the instructor of record and with the approval of the academic chair/director, a grade of WH will be assigned only if the student cannot complete the course work because of unavoidable circumstances. Students must complete the work within one calendar year from the end of the semester in which they receive a WH, or the grade automatically becomes an F. If students register for the same course in future terms the WH will automatically become an F and will be counted as a repeated course for the purpose of computing the grade point average.

Course Conduct: Classroom behavior should not interfere with the instructor's ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to learn from the instructional program. Unacceptable or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. Students who disrupt the learning environment may be asked to leave class and may be subject to judicial, academic or other penalties. This prohibition applies to all instructional forums, including electronic, classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc. The instructor shall have full discretion over what behavior is appropriate/inappropriate in the classroom.

Cell Phones and Other Recording Devices

The use of cell phones and other recording or electronic devices is strictly prohibited during class. The instructor may direct, from time to time, on the possible use of cell phones for legitimate class reasons. Recording the class is prohibited, unless it is part of a reasonable accommodation under ADA, or by obtaining written consent by the instructor.

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. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exist in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

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 <http://www.mwsu.edu/student-life/disability>.

College Policies

Campus Carry Rules/Policies

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

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 entitled "Run. Hide. Fight." which may be electronically accessed via the University police department's webpage: "[Run. Hide. Fight.](#)"

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.

Grade Appeal Process

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [Undergraduate Catalog](#)

Cleaning Protocols

Students will be expected to sanitize equipment before they check it out and when they return it as well. Each student will be assigned access to specific pieces of equipment to minimize the number of students who use any single camera, microphone, light kit or recording device. Students will be allowed to use their own equipment if approved by the instructor. You will be expected to arrange usage needs with your equipment group.

University Information on Campus Coronavirus Policies

Refer to: <https://msutexas.edu/coronavirus/>

Office Hours

I will be holding the required number of office hours this semester; however, I will not be meeting with students in my office. If you require an in-person meeting, a sign-up will be available on my door. We will meet with masks in the studio. If you need help on a project, I will be able to access your computer from my office to demonstrate how to fix issues you may be having. Otherwise, the expectation will be that meetings are done via Zoom, Skype or Meet.

Social Distancing

I expect adherence to social distancing policies in the entire D-Wing of the Mass Communication building. Students must maintain a six foot separation. If you do

not adhere to this, you will lose equipment privileges, regardless of any assignment you have due.

Attendance Addendum

Any student who will miss class due to illness should notify the instructor as soon as possible. If you are experiencing symptoms of any illness, please stay home and attend the online lecture. If you are experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19, please seek medical help right away.

Notice

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor. Please understand that we will use D2L very heavily just in case there is a need to switch to online instruction. If that switch were to occur our equipment and software will change, but our projects and course goals will not. All projects will remain the same in case of a switch to online instruction.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 08/25 – 08/29	COURSE INTRODUCTION Lecture: Documentaries vs. Other Forms of Narratives Screen: <i>Madison In Pieces</i>
Week 2 09/01 – 09/05	TOPIC SELECTION Lecture: Defining a good story/Writing the proposal & treatment Reading: Chapters 1, 2, & pgs. 62-76 Screen: selected short docs
Week 3 09/08 – 09/12	REVIEW OF EQUIPMENT Lecture: Cameras and Editing 09/08: TOPIC SELECTION PROPOSALS DUE 09/10: SOURCE LIST W/CONTACT INFO DUE, INITIAL CONTACTS MADE Reading: Chapter 9

Week 4 09/15 – 09/19	Lecture: Composition: textual and subtextual Optional: Conferences Reading: Chapter 8
Week 5 09/22 – 09/26	Seminar: Interviewing/Sources Lecture: Image/Lighting Design Reading: Chapter 6
Week 6 09/29 – 10/03	Lecture: Lenses & Composition Lecture: Sound Design in the Field Reading: Chapter 7 09/29: SEQUENCE LAYOUT DUE
Week 7 10/06 – 10/10	Lecture: Sound Design in Media Composer/ProTools Editing Review Reading: Chapter 11
Week 8 10/13 – 10/17	Editing Review Lecture: Legal and Ethical Dilemmas Reading: Chapter 12
Week 9 10/20 – 10/24	Work Day 10/21: SCRIPT DUE
Week 10 10/27 – 10/31	Mandatory Conferences 10/28: SCRIPT NOTES RETURNED Reading: Chapter 13
Week 11 11/03 – 11/07	<WORK WEEK>

	11/06: STRINGOUTS DUE
Week 12 11/10 – 11/14	<WORK WEEK> STRINGOUT NOTES Reading: Chapter 14
Week 13 11/17 – 11/21	11/18: POSTER, TITLES & SHORT DESCRIPTIONS DUE 11/20: ROUGH EDITS DUE BY CLASS
Week 14 11/24 – 11/28	11/25: ROUGH EDIT NOTES RETURNED <WORK WEEK> THANKSGIVING
Week 15 12/01 – 12/05	Conferences 12/05: PICTURE LOCK CUTS DUE BY 5PM
Week 16 12/08 – 12/12	FINALS WEEK Final Date: 12/11, 10:30AM-12:30PM Final Cuts Due by 8AM 12/09 Test Screening 12/11 @ 12PM Screenings 12/12 @ 12PM