



Course Syllabus: Digital Film Production

College of Fine Arts
MCOM 4463 Section 101
Fall 2026: FA D101, TR 11AM – 12:20PM

Contact Information

Instructor: Jonathon Quam
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Course Description

This course is an immersive workshop in digital film production. Students are responsible for developing and producing a 7–10 minute short film or documentary, either independently or in small teams. The course emphasizes the full production cycle—from concept development and pre-production planning to principal photography, editing, and final delivery.

Each student must serve in a primary creative role on a project—such as director, writer, cinematographer, or editor—while also contributing collaboratively to peer projects. In addition to their own work, students are expected to support classmates through crew participation, feedback, and shared production responsibilities.

By the end of the semester, students will complete a polished short film or documentary suitable for portfolio inclusion and potential festival submission. Emphasis is placed on professional workflow, creative leadership, and storytelling craft.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

Required Materials: UHS-II SD Card (32, 64 or 128Gb)

Suggested Reading: *In the Blink of an Eye* (2nd Edition), Walter Murch, 1995

Suggested Reading: *Sight, Sound, Motion* (7th ed.), Herbert Zettl, 2016

Study Hours and Tutoring Assistance

Professor Quam offers assistance outside class hours through appointment and during scheduled office hours.

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Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given).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

[Office of Student Conduct](#)

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.

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.

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.

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Percent
Productions: Technical	25
Productions: Writing	25
Deadlines	10
Crew Grade	10
Participation	30

Table 2: Total points for final grade.

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

Homework

Each student will complete a variety of single and team productions designed to give a hands-on study of advanced production techniques including: media packages, studio productions, multitrack audio editing, short films, and event/performance based projects.

Late work will be accepted at a reduced grade. Projects are to be turned in at the beginning of class on the date they're due. Any late work will lose 15% of the assignment grade. Grading will be based on your comprehension and use of theory, methodology, and technique discussed in class. If you need an extension, please message me at least 24hrs in advance of a deadline.

Senior 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'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 senior 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: <http://finearts.mwsu.edu/masscomm/>.

Deadlines must be met. All missed deadlines result in a 25% loss on the project. Three missed deadlines will result in being dropped from the course. Deadlines will be handed out with assignments.

Projects Required

Your projects for this semester include: Podcast Storytelling Project, Camera Familiarization Exercise, Interview Storytelling Project, Social Media Project

Extra Credit

Extra credit will be offered at the discretion of the instructor.

Important Dates

- Last day for term schedule changes: August 27
Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Deadline to file for graduation: September 21
Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:"October 7
Check date on [Academic Calendar](#).
- 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

You are required to attend every class. Every unexcused absence will result in the loss of a letter grade.

Recording Classes

Recording is prohibited except in certain circumstances. The instructor will notify the class when they may record course lecture.

Instructor Class Policies

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.

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 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](#).

Emergency Aid Resources for Basic Needs

Unexpected life circumstances can affect anyone. If you are experiencing challenges meeting basic needs—such as housing, utilities, food, transportation, healthcare, technology, textbooks or other life necessities, resources may be available to help. Visit the [Student Emergency Support and Resources webpage](#) to learn more, and explore emergency support opportunities through MSU and how to access them. For additional information, please contact the Office of Student Affairs: Clark Student Center #108, (940) 397-7500, student.affairs@mstuexas.edu.

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.

Campus Carry

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 has prohibited. The new 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](#).

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

Update as needed. Students who wish to appeal a 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.

Course Schedule:

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.

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams
Week 1 08/24 – 08/28	COURSE OVERVIEW/EXPECTATIONS Roles in the Newsroom and Studio Roles in Narrative Production
Week 2 08/31 – 09/04	Tuesday: Studio Production Work Thursday: Screenwriting and Story Development
Week 3 09/07 – 09/11	Tuesday: Multicam Directing and Technical Directing Workflow Thursday: Visual Storytelling and Cinematic Language
Week 4 09/14 – 09/18	Tuesday: Live Event Coverage Thursday: Working with Actors – Casting, Rehearsals, and Performance Direction
Week 5 09/22 – 09/26	Tuesday: Shooting & Editing News Packages Thursday: Cinematography I – Cameras, Lenses, and Composition
Week 6 09/28 – 10/02	Tuesday: Podcasting & Audio Production for Broadcast Thursday: Sound Design and Audio for Film

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams
Week 7 10/05 – 10/09	Tuesday: Producing for Digital and Social Platforms (short-form broadcast content) Thursday: Cinematography II – Lighting for Mood and Narrative
Week 8 10/12 – 10/16	Tuesday: Studio Management and Show Running (control room workflow) Thursday: Production Design and Visual Style
Week 9 10/19 – 10/23	Tuesday: Writing & Producing for Broadcast Anchors and Talent Thursday: Editing I – Narrative Structure and Rhythm
Week 10 10/26 – 10/30	Tuesday: Documentary Approaches in Broadcast News Thursday: Documentary Approaches in Film
Week 11 11/02 – 11/06	Tuesday: Advanced Graphics and On-Screen Visuals for News Thursday: Editing II – Color Grading and Post Workflow
Week 12 11/09 – 11/13	Tuesday: Producing Interviews and Talk-Style Shows Thursday: Working with Soundtracks and Music Licensing
Week 13 11/16 – 11/20	Tuesday: Audience Engagement and Analytics in Broadcast Media Thursday: Independent Film Distribution and Festival Strategy
Week 14 11/23 – 11/27	THANKSGIVING WEEK
Week 15 11/30 – 12/04	Tuesday: Professional Practices – Resumes, Demo Reels, and Careers Thursday: Preparing Films for Final Screening (exports, QC, delivery)
Week 16 12/07 – 12/11	FINAL PRODUCTION SHOWCASE! Final: 12/08, 1PM