



Course Syllabus: Senior Production

College of Fine Arts
MCOM 4243 Section 101
Fall 2026: FA D101, TR 12:30PM – 1:50PM

Contact Information

Instructor: Jonathon Quam
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Course Description

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.

Documentary screenings will be Friday Dec. 11 @ 12pm. Procedures are still being decided on.

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

Textbook & Instructional Materials

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

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Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given).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
Final Documentary	50
Deadlines	25
Weekly Reports/Conferences	5
Smaller Assignments/Projects	10
Participation/Cooperation	10

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

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 1 08/24 – 08/28	COURSE INTRODUCTION Lecture: Documentaries vs. Other Forms of Narratives Screen: <i>Madison In Pieces</i>
Week 2 08/31 – 09/04	TOPIC SELECTION Lecture: Defining a good story/Writing the proposal & treatment Reading: Chapters 1, 2, & pgs. 62-76 Screen: selected short docs
Week 3 09/07 – 09/11	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 09/14 – 09/18	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 09/28 – 10/02	Lecture: Lenses & Composition Lecture: Sound Design in the Field Reading: Chapter 7 09/29: SEQUENCE LAYOUT DUE
Week 7 10/05 – 10/09	Lecture: Sound Design in Media Composer/ProTools Editing Review Reading: Chapter 11
Week 8 10/12 – 10/16	Editing Review Lecture: Legal and Ethical Dilemmas Reading: Chapter 12
Week 9 10/19 – 10/23	Work Day 10/22: SCRIPT DUE

Week 10 10/26 – 10/30	Mandatory Conferences 10/27: SCRIPT NOTES RETURNED Reading: Chapter 13
Week 11 11/02 – 11/06	<WORK WEEK> 11/05: STRINGOUTS DUE
Week 12 11/09 – 11/13	<WORK WEEK> STRINGOUT NOTES Reading: Chapter 14
Week 13 11/16 – 11/20	11/17: POSTER, TITLES & SHORT DESCRIPTIONS DUE 11/19: ROUGH EDITS DUE BY CLASS
Week 14 11/23 – 11/27	11/25: ROUGH EDIT NOTES RETURNED <WORK WEEK> THANKSGIVING
Week 15 11/30 – 12/04	Conferences 12/05: PICTURE LOCK CUTS DUE BY 5PM
Week 16 12/07 – 12/11	FINALS WEEK Final Date: 12/10, 10:30AM-12:30PM Final Cuts Due by 8AM 12/08 Test Screening 12/10 @ 12PM Screenings 12/11 @ 12PM