



Course Syllabus: Writing for the Digital World
Lamar D. Fain College of Fine Arts
MCOM 1603 Section 201
Spring 2026

Contact Information

Instructor: Amar Spencer, M.A.

Office: Fain College D205

Office hours: Tuesdays: 2pm – 4pm | Wednesdays: 1pm – 3pm |

Thursdays: 2pm – 4pm

Office Phone: (940) 397-6608

E-mail: amar.spencer@msutexas.edu

Course Description

Course Catalogue Description: This course is designed to give students the basic skills needed to write for the print and broadcast media, public relations, advertising and digital media. Emphasis will be placed on learning the proper format for each medium as well as accuracy, technical ability, fairness, coherence and speed in writing.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will gain an appreciation for, and a better ability with, the “nuts and bolts” of good writing: spelling, grammar, sentence structure, style, punctuation, word choice and clarity.
- Students will learn the basics of proper structure and formatting for various media.
- Students will be prepared to move on to other classes in the major, such as Media Writing and Reporting (MCOM 2243), Public Relations Principles (MCOM 4683) and Foundations of Media Production (MCOM 3313).

This class does not include outside reporting, as it focuses on mastering the art of writing – the cornerstone of success in a mass communication career.

Textbook & Instructional Materials

The Associated Press Stylebook 57th Edition (required)

Any paperback dictionary (required)

Any Thesaurus (recommended)

Please also note that numerous handouts will be given throughout the semester to supplement the lectures.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty will not be tolerated. This includes: cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work, not the individual to whom credit is given). Students are expected to uphold academic integrity. The Office of Student Conduct governs academic misconduct policy and procedures.

AI Policy

AI may be used for pre-task activities such as brainstorming, outlining and initial research. You may use AI for planning, idea development, and initial research. Your final submission should show how you developed and refined these initial ideas into the final submission (AI Level 2 Policy adopted from VinUniversity Artificial Intelligence Assessment Scale).

Moffett Library

The 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.

Grading

Table 1: Points allocated to each assignment

Assignments	Weighting
Test 1	10%
Test 2	15%
Test 3	15%
Writing Assignments	60%

Tests and Assignments

Tests and Writing Assignments will make up the graded components of the course.

A test will be given after each unit is covered, amounting to a total of three tests throughout the semester.

In-class and homework writing assignments will be given throughout the semester and will account for a total of 60% of coursework. Specific details and dates pertaining to each assignment will be communicated during the semester.

Students will be given ample time to prepare for each test/complete each writing assignment.

Extra Credit

I do not typically give or accept extra credit assignments. Students are expected to take advantage of my office hours, utilize handouts, keep abreast with readings and all other course material to earn the best possible grade.

Late Work

Students are expected to turn in all assignments on time, at the beginning of class, on the assigned due date. Late work will not be accepted, unless there are extenuating circumstances that led to the work being late. I reserve the right to determine whether or not the reason given by the student is legitimate.

Make-up Work/Tests

A student who misses an assignment/test will only be allowed to do a make-up assignment/test if the student missed the original date because

of a legitimate reason. Once again, I will determine whether or not the reason is valid.

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 me or the technicians listed for the program.

Attendance

Students are expected to attend all class meetings. Given that this is a communication class, class participation is especially important. If your absence is due to extenuating circumstances, the absence will be excused, at my discretion. However, students with excessive absences will be dropped from the course by the instructor.

Being more than ten minutes tardy will be counted as late. Three times tardy will count as an absence.

Instructor Class Policies

Students are expected to be respectful of both their peers and the instructor and conduct themselves in a manner that is in accordance with the university's Code of Conduct. Cell phones should be kept off or on silent for the duration of class. Texting and using social media are not allowed during class. Students are expected to bring their writing materials to each class in order to take notes during lectures.

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.

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 an 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](#).

College 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 prohibit 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 as 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 the 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

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:

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 1 01/20 to 01/23	Course Overview UNIT 1: Basics of Good Writing & AP Style	N/A
Week 2 01/26 to 01/30	AP & Copy Editing	N/A
Week 3 02/02 to 02/06	Copy Editing & Punctuation	N/A
Week 4 02/09 to 02/13	Word Choice and Sentence Structure	N/A
Week 5 02/16 to 02/20	Test 1	Test 1 – February 17 th
Week 6 02/23 to 02/27	UNIT 2: Writing for Print/Web	N/A
Week 7 03/02 to 03/06	Writing for Print/Web	N/A
Week 8 03/09 to 03/13	SPRING BREAK	SPRING BREAK
Week 9 03/16 to 03/20	Writing for Print/Web	N/A
Week 10 03/23 to 03/27	Writing for Print/Web	N/A
Week 11 03/30 to 04/03	Test 2 04/02 – 04/04 HOLIDAY BREAK	Test 2 – March 31 st
Week 12 04/06 to 04/10	UNIT 3: Writing for Broadcast: Broadcast Format, Broadcast Style	N/A
Week 13 04/13 to 04/17	Writing for Broadcast	N/A
Week 14 04/20 to 04/24	Writing for Broadcast	N/A
Week 15 04/27 to 05/01	Test 3	Test 3 – April 30 th
Week 16 05/04 to 05/08	Course Wrap-Up	N/A
Week 17 05/09 to 05/14	FINALS WEEK	N/A