Syllabus
JOU 4342C Converged Journalism
Spring Semester 2008

Meets:
Tuesday and Thursday, 12:00 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.
Room COM 211

Instructor: Dan Shaver
Office: Nicholson School of Communication Rm. 227
Office Hours: 2:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday
10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. Wednesdays
Other times available by appointment

Contact me at:
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Mobile Phone: 407-758-7962
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(Please don’t call before 8 a.m. or after 9 p.m.)
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Class Web Site: http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~dshaver/ (or Google “Dan Shaver Class”)
At the web site, click on the link to the pages related to this course.

Course Description:

"Not long ago, the typical beginning reporter faced a simple choice: print or broadcast. Those options remain. But today’s growth area is in multimedia jobs that blur and often obliterate the old boundaries. It’s a proving ground forging not just new kinds of journalism but a new species of journalists, as well." (Carl Sessions Stepp, senior editor, American Journalism Review)

"The Web -- and a converged multimedia news environment -- seem more clearly than ever to be journalism’s future." (Project for Excellence in Journalism, State of the News Media annual report, 2005)

Come gather 'round people
Wherever you roam
And admit that the waters
Around you have grown
And accept it that soon
You'll be drenched to the bone.
If your time to you
Is worth savin'
Then you better start swimmin'
Or you'll sink like a stone
For the times they are a-changin'.
(Bob Dylan)
The media landscape is indeed “a-changin’.” The changes affect audiences, the economics and structure of the news business, what’s news and how news is reported. That’s what this course is about—teaching you to dog paddle.

First, though, a word about what this course is not.

- **It is not a technology course.** You will have to deal with some technology but we will be using the most simplified, automated technology possible so we can focus on content issues and journalistic principles. Although this means we will be more restricted than we might otherwise be in adding “bells and whistles” to content, I’ll take those restrictions into consideration in grading projects. The important thing is to keep our focus on developing journalistically relevant skills rather than software skills. As we critique the web sites you create, however, we’ll discuss the techniques used to create specific features and you may be asked to demonstrate those techniques to the class to strengthen the learning experience.

- **It will not turn you into a “converged” journalist.** That’s impossible to do in one semester. Many of the topics that we’ll cover in one class are properly taught in semester-long classes. What it will do is develop your understanding of multi-media and multi-channel news delivery issues, sharpen your critical thinking skills regarding converged media, and give you an appreciation of the skills you will need to nurture to function professionally in a digital news environment.

The goal is for you to come away from the course with…

- A greater understanding of convergent media and storytelling across print, video, visual and online. An understanding of the different writing and presentation styles best suited for stories in print, broadcast and online media, and how to apply those styles to produce well-written stories.

- Experience working as part of a team, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities, to develop and execute online reporting projects.

- Improved understanding of news website planning, production and design.

- An appreciation of the issues that media outlets face in a networked, digital world.

- The ability to conceptualize and successfully execute a multi-media news package.

**Prerequisites/Course Details:**

You must have completed JOU 2100 and MMC 4200, possess solid English grammar skills, an understanding of news story structure, and a solid mastery of AP style. Completion of other advanced reporting skills class is strongly recommended. This course assumes that you bring an already high level of print reporting and writing skills to the digital environment. Our time will be spent developing new skills rather than honing those you should already have mastered.

**Required Texts:**
Convergent Journalism: An Introduction by Stephen Quinn and Vincent Filak

Other readings as assigned during the course.

You should also read the Orlando Sentinel on a daily basis.

NewsU:

For some portions of this class, we will use interactive online training modules developed by The Poynter Institute. In the second class, we’ll establish accounts that will allow each of you to access the modules. Because the modules typically take 90 minutes to three hours to complete, we’ll use a substantial portion of the class time for you to work on these learning activities. If you do not complete the module in class, you can access the Poynter site and resume work on the module from home, from one of the university labs or even on your laptop from Starbucks. You are expected to complete each of the modules we begin in class and to document that by turning in at the beginning of the next class period a summary of the content covered and chief learning points. The summary should not exceed one page. Since the computers in COM 211 do not have speakers, you will be responsible for providing your own earphones for the NewsU exercises. Please remember to bring a set to class on the days that a NewsU exercise is scheduled on the syllabus.

Course Structure:

Print journalism has always required a team effort, but digital/converged journalism carries the need for teamwork to a new level and introduces new roles and functions. The class will be divided into news teams at the second class meeting. I will assign team members based on an analysis of skill and experience factors to ensure that each team has an appropriate range of skills and expertise.

The first part of the class will focus strongly on skill/concept development. Assignments during this period will involve analysis and critical thinking. The second portion of the class will be strongly focused on applying those skills to creating converged news products. Those assignments will stress the application of the skills and concepts from the first portion of the course in a team-oriented environment.

The class will consist of a mixture of individual assignments and group projects involving the news teams. The assignments will be…

Individual Assignments:

- Discussion Leader: On the second day of class, each individual will be asked to sign up to lead class discussion on an article of particular relevance to the class. All articles are available online and everyone in the class will be expected to read the article before class so they can participate effectively in the discussion. The
discussion leader, however, will be responsible for reviewing the key material and developing discussion questions and points. Discussion leaders may use visual aids if they wish, but are not required to do so. The discussion of each article should last about 10 minutes. Due dates will vary by person and the assignment chosen. This will account for ten percent of your final grade.

- News Project Site Evaluations: News project sites differ from general news sites in that they are focused on a particular story or subject, may or may not be updated regularly, and don’t necessarily report breaking news. Examples include:
  - Toxic Legacy (http://www.toxiclegacy.com/loader.html)
  - Bird Flu: Fears, Facts and Fiction (http://abcnews.go.com/Health/AvianFlu/)
  - Minnesota’s Climate Change (http://www.kare11.com/news/specials/climate/)

Choose a project site—you may use one of the above or choose your own. Critique the site in three pages or less. Consider the following:
- How well does the site use navigation?
- How effectively is it designed?
- How effectively does it use photos, graphics, broadcast and interactive elements?
- How much (if any) of the reporting appears to have been done by the online staff as opposed to other journalists?
- How well are the stories written/presented/packaged?
- What did you love about it? Hate about it? Why?

This assignment will represent five percent of your final grade and will be due January 15. Be prepared to discuss your site and evaluation in class if called upon to do so. Ten percent of final grade.

- General News Site Evaluation: Pick a general news site maintained by a major media organization—CNN, Fox, The New York Times, The Orlando Sentinel, etc. Analyze that site considering the following:
  - How well does the site use navigation?
  - How effectively is it designed?
• How effectively does it use photos, graphics, broadcast and interactive elements?
• How effectively does the site provide choice, context and optional background material for news consumers?
• How effectively is the site updated to handle breaking news?
• How well are the stories written/presented/packaged?
• What did you love about it? Hate about it? Why?

This assignment will represent five percent of your final grade and will be due January 29. Be prepared to discuss your site and evaluation in class if called upon to do so. Ten percent of final grade.

• Blog Site Evaluations: The Cyberjournalist List contains a comprehensive listing of journalistic blogs. Go to the site (http://www.cyberjournalist.net/cyberjournalists.php) and select one from the J Blogs list “Published by news sites-ongoing.”

Give a brief description of the blog and evaluate its contents. Does it appear to be timely and authoritative? What is the quality of commentary from readers? What is the quality of writing? To what degree is opinion intertwined with factual reporting? How difficult is it to distinguish the two? What do you like about the blog? What did you hate? Why?

This assignment will represent five percent of your final grade and will be due January 29. Be prepared to discuss your site and evaluation in class if called upon to do so. Ten percent of final grade.

• Your Blog. You will set up and maintain an individual Weblog, or blog, between February 5 and April 10. (We’ll establish your blog account in class.) Your blog must have a specific focus (e.g., politics, education, environment, technology, sports, movies, etc) that will be maintained throughout the course.

One post is required each week. Each blog post must link to and comment on at least one pertinent and recent Web page, Web site or specific blog post by another author. Your posts need not be too long (think about 100 words per post), but they do need to say something. Each post will be graded on content (Is it interesting? Relevant to your blog’s focus? Timely, current? 50%), mechanics (grammar, spelling, punctuation and AP style – 25%), and the quality and relevance of the link(s) (25%). Your blog posts should meet professional journalistic standards.

This assignment will represent 10 percent of your final grade.
**Group Assignments:**

- Two ungraded news reporting assignments will be scheduled to help the teams develop skills needed for the graded exercises. We’ll discuss how these events are to be selected in class.

- Breaking News Exercises: As noted above, there will be two of these during the semester. These exercises will enable you to function as a team in the planning and execution of a breaking news event. [Admittedly, given the time restrictions on our exercise, it may not be the most earth-shattering event of the 21st Century, but it will give you an opportunity to exercise teamwork and the skills you’ll be developing in the course.]

The first exercise will count 10 percent of your final grade and the second exercise will contribute 15 percent. Factors that I’ll consider in evaluating your team’s performance—in addition to the quality of the final news package—will be how effectively your team coordinates its activities, plans and executes, and news judgment about how to frame/contextualize the event.

The news product itself will be evaluated after your team has had the benefit of the critique discussion and has 48 hours to make appropriate changes.

- Final Project: Your team will assemble a final news project on some newsworthy topic. The final package will consist of a newspaper story of at 800-1,000 words (which will be turned in hard copy). You will develop a complementary online site that expands the “print” story and has multiple elements. The final project will represent 25 percent of your final grade.

**General Story Guidelines:**

- Each story package must include interviews with a minimum of six sources. Even stories about speeches, or congressional testimony, should be balanced by indicating conflicting opinions or including reaction. Packages should reflect the sense that public policy issues are multi-faceted; journalists do this by including sources whose positions, background, knowledge and interests give them reason to know and understand how public policy in a particular area is developing and the impact of policy decisions. Documents and reports should also be used as sources where appropriate, but they will not count against the human source minimum. Your relatives, friends and classmates are NOT acceptable sources.

- Hard copy assignments due at the beginning of a class period should be stapled with your name, the identification of the assignment (e.g., “Blog Site Evaluations”), and the date of submission at the top of the page. All printed copies of submitted material must be double-spaced with one-inch side margins and 12 pt. type. Assignments should be printed on only one side of the page. **Submissions that fail to adhere to these requirements will be returned ungraded for resubmission and will be considered late.**
Class Policies:

- The School of Communication’s Journalism Division adheres to the Code of Ethics adopted by the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ). Journalism is a limited access program, and students who violate the code – who plagiarize or fabricate, for example – will be dropped from the program. Cases will be reviewed by a committee of faculty members. Students who cheat in a class will be given an “F” for the class and, at the faculty members’ discretion, violations of the SPJ code – or of UCF’s Golden Rule – may also be referred to Student Legal Services.

- Do not arrive late. Do not miss class. If you are ill or must miss a class for any reason, call or email me before class to explain the problem. If you must miss class, all work will be due as scheduled unless you make other arrangements with me ahead of time.

- Please do check your email account or engage in unrelated web surfing during class. Those doing so may be excused from the class so that the educational process will not infringe on their personal interests.

- All written assignments must be delivered at the beginning of class in hard copy meeting the formatting requirements noted above.

- All assignments are due at the beginning of class. There will not be an opportunity to print written assignments out in the classroom, so do it ahead of time. Online assignments and blog entries should be available online at the beginning of class. Failure to turn in an assignment on time reduces the grade by one letter grade for each day past the original deadline. Failure to turn in a story within one week of the due date results in an F for that assignment. NOTE: All assignments must be turned in to achieve a passing grade in this course. Failure to turn in an assignment—even if it is too late to receive a passing grade—will result in an F for the course.

- It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet at the beginning of class. If you arrive late and the sign-in sheet has already been passed around, it is your responsibility to see me at the end of class to add your name to the list. Failure to do so will count as an absence. Do not approach me days later and say you were there but missed the sheet. Attendance will significantly impact your class participation grade.

Representation to Sources:

As you are reporting stories, you may be asked whom you represent. You should tell any sources that you are a journalism student at the University of Central Florida and that your assignment is for a class. For some assignments, you will be asked to rely upon public information, which any members of the public, including you, are entitled to see. You are welcome to give sources my name, number and e-mail to contact if there are any
questions. If you are considering submitting the story for publication, the source should be informed that the story might be offered for publication.

**Grading:**

The following components will determine your final grade:

- **Team Projects** ………………………………… 50%
  - Weights:
    - Breaking Coverage Exercise 1 ……………. 10 %
    - Breaking Coverage Exercise 2……………… 15 %
    - Final Project… ………………………………… 25 %

- **Individual Projects** …………………………………50%
  - Weights:
    - Discussion Leadership ……………………. 10 %
    - News Project Site Evaluations …………. 10%
    - General News Site Evaluations …………. 10%
    - Blog Site Evaluations ……………………. 10%
    - Blog Entries ………………………………. 10%

The Grading Scale is:

- A = 4.0
- A- = 3.75
- B+ = 3.25
- B = 3.0
- B- = 2.75
- C+ = 2.25
- C = 2.0
- C- = 1.75
- D+ = 1.25
- D = 1.0
- D- = 0.75
- F = 0.0

Each assignment will be graded for accuracy, meeting of deadlines, substance, presentation/navigation/links (for Web projects), news judgment, usability and style. AP Stylebook rules and rules of grammar should be followed. If an assignment is confusing, incomplete or inaccurate, contains a serious error of fact, a misspelled proper noun or name or a statement that is libelous, it will receive an F.

The primary criteria for evaluating news assignments will be their suitability under the standards of a news site maintained by a daily commercial newspaper such as *The Orlando Sentinel*, but please note that there are penalties associated with grammar, spelling, factual errors or missed deadlines.
Questions I will consider in evaluating your multimedia news projects will include:

- Is the text well written with no style, grammar, or mechanical errors and does it reflect suitable style conventions for the chosen medium?
- Does the project make effective use of links, multimedia content, navigation tools and contextual/supplementary content to provide the reader flexibility in consuming the information in the way that he/she desires? Is there an effective use of a “related stories” or “additional information” links?
- Does the project reflect thoughtful site and story planning and a high level of teamwork between elements of the news production team?
- For the final project, how newsworthy is the topic and related information?
- Does the design of the project reflect unity, consistency and identify? Is it clear to the reader that pages are related to one another in time and style?
- How usable is the design? Are links easily discoverable? Do they work properly? Is it easy to navigate the project?
- Do text stories demonstrate excellent reporting and writing—focus, brevity, accuracy, thoroughness, appropriate sourcing and clear attribution?
- Do pages and stories include techniques that improve online “scanability” for readers:
  - “Chunking” in longer stories
  - Lists
  - Bolded key words, etc.

Because learning comes from doing, you may rewrite any of the individual graded critiques and evaluations. The rewrite must represent a significant improvement from the original—not merely a correction of errors noted in the original grading memo. No rewritten assignment can receive a grade greater than an “A-“. There is no guarantee that the rewrite grade will be higher than the initial grade.

If you rewrite an assignment, you must submit: (1) the original edited/graded assignment that I returned to you along with a copy of my comments; (2) a statement describing the lessons you learned in rewriting the initial assignment and the steps you took to improve the rewrite; (3) the rewritten assignment. Rewrites will not receive the same level of detailed feedback as the original assignment. All rewrites must be completed and resubmitted within one week of the class in which the original story is returned to you. Rewrites will not be accepted after that point. Electronic delivery of rewrites is not permitted because you cannot submit the original graded story electronically. Rewrites that lack either the original graded story with comments or the description of the steps taken to improve the story and lessons learned will not be accepted.

The “Breaking Coverage” exercises will not be graded until after the critique feedback. Your team will then have 48 hours to modify your coverage package based on what you learned from the feedback and your own discussions. At that time, the package will be considered final. No re-grading will be permitted.
There will be no opportunity to rework the Final Project. However, several class periods at the end of the semester have been set aside for the teams to work in class where I can provide feedback and answer questions and a class critique is scheduled before the final project is due.

**Warning:** Spelling and grammar are a journalist’s (converged or not) most basic tools. **ANY** text content (including site critiques) will receive a reduced grade for spelling, typographical and grammatical errors. Remember, failure to turn in a deliverable on time reduces the grade by one letter grade for each day past the deadline. Failure to turn in an assignment within one week of the due date results in an F for that assignment.

**Course Schedule:**

The following schedule is strictly an outline and some dates, topics or assignments may change during the semester due to the needs of the class or the availability of guest speakers. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on the class web site. It is your responsibility to regularly check the site announcements page. From time to time, readings may be posted on the web site either directly or through links to other sites. These readings are considered required readings and you will be responsible for being prepared to discuss the material in class.

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<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 8</td>
<td>Introduction, Syllabus Review, What is Convergence? How does it affect traditional newsroom roles?</td>
<td>• Complete Survey</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 10</td>
<td>Production team formation and teambuilding.</td>
<td>• Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapters 1 and 2</td>
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<td>• Article Assignments</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>January 15</td>
<td>Introduction to Digital Storytelling</td>
<td>• <strong>The Elements of Digital Storytelling</strong> <a href="http://www.inmsumn.edu/elements/index.php">http://www.inmsumn.edu/elements/index.php</a></td>
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<td>• Specialized News Project Site Evaluation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>January 22</td>
<td>Blogging and Blog Account Registration</td>
<td>• <strong>Bloggers vs. Journalists is Over</strong> <a href="http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2005/0">http://journalism.nyu.edu/pubzone/weblogs/pressthink/2005/0</a></td>
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<td>January 24</td>
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<td>• ** What Bloggers Can Learn From Journalists</td>
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<td>• ** Blogging as a Form of Journalism</td>
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<td>6 January 29</td>
<td>Writing for Online</td>
<td>• Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapter 5</td>
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<td>• General News Site Evaluation</td>
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<td>• Blog Evaluations</td>
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<td>• ** How Google News is changing the way newspaper headlines are written</td>
<td><a href="http://www.collisiondetection.net/mt/archives/2006/04/how_google_news.html">http://www.collisiondetection.net/mt/archives/2006/04/how_google_news.html</a></td>
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<td>• ** Concise, SCANNABLE, and Objective: How to Write for the Web</td>
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<td>7 January 31</td>
<td>Online storytelling and story planning. How to use storyboards.</td>
<td>• Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapter 4</td>
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<td>8 February</td>
<td>Breaking Coverage Practice 1</td>
<td>• Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapters 7 and 8</td>
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<td>9 February</td>
<td>In-Class Site Building for Coverage Practice 1</td>
<td>• Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapter 10</td>
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<td>• ** A new media tells different stories</td>
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<td>10 February</td>
<td>In-Class Site Building for Coverage Practice 1</td>
<td>• Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapter 6</td>
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<td>• ** When, How to Tell Stories with Text, Multimedia</td>
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<td>11 February</td>
<td>Critique of Coverage Practice 1</td>
<td>• ** On the Wild, Woolly Internet, Old Ethics Rules Do Apply</td>
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<td>12 February</td>
<td>Breaking Coverage Practice 2</td>
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<td>13 February</td>
<td>In-Class Site Building for Coverage Practice 1</td>
<td>• ** Linking, Framing and Inlining</td>
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<td>February 28</td>
<td>Critique of Coverage Practice 2 Sites</td>
<td>• ** We Media: How Audiences Are Shaping the Future of News and Information <a href="http://www.hypergen">http://www.hypergen</a> e.net/wemedia/weblog.php</td>
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<td>March 4</td>
<td>Graded Coverage Exercise 1</td>
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<td>March 6</td>
<td>In-Class Site Building for Graded Coverage 1</td>
<td>• A Dozen Online Writing Tips <a href="http://www.cyberjour">http://www.cyberjour</a> nalist.net/news/0001 18.php</td>
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<td>March 11</td>
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<td>March 18</td>
<td>Critique of Graded Coverage 1</td>
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<td>March 20</td>
<td>Graded Coverage 2</td>
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<td>March 25</td>
<td>In-Class Site Building for Graded Coverage 2</td>
<td>• Editing the Future <a href="http://www.editteach.org/special/editingth">http://www.editteach.org/special/editingth</a> efuture/04_Castro/story.htm</td>
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<td>March 27</td>
<td>In-Class Site Building for Graded Coverage 2</td>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>Critique of Graded Coverage 2</td>
<td>• ** 10 Big Myths about copyright explained <a href="http://www.templetons.c">http://www.templetons.c</a> om/brad/copymyths.html</td>
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<td>April 3</td>
<td>In-Class Work on Final Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>In-Class Work on Final Project</td>
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<td>April 10</td>
<td>Final Project Critique</td>
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<td>April 15</td>
<td>Convergence and the Future of Media</td>
<td>• Final Project Due • Quinn &amp; Filak, Chapter 13 • New News Retrospective: Is Online News Reaching It’s</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>April 17</td>
<td>Presentation of Final Projects</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Final Exam Period</td>
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