

**Multimedia Writing/Online Journalism**  
**Comm 491/Comm 690**  
**Spring 2008**

**Instructor:** Dr. Deneen Gilmour  
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**Class:** 6 to 8:30 p.m. Tuesdays, IACC 132  
and Filak

**Textbook:** “Convergent Journalism” by Quinn

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**Objectives:**

- To learn and practice advanced reporting methods for converged media, including lede writing, clean and clear storytelling and ethical convergence journalism practices;
- To expose students to some of the tools of convergence media but to focus on reporting, writing, visuals, audio, graphics and interactivity rather than specific software programs;
- To understand and practice non-linear storytelling and editing;
- To produce a multimedia journalism story package in a journalism lab setting;
- To become familiar with skills such as storyboarding, updating stories in the converged environment, to create “shells” that contain a central story surrounded by verbal, visual and lateral elements and links that enrich story context.
- To integrate blog technology and online writing techniques into the classroom.

**Course Description:** The course provides students with an introduction to multimedia journalism writing techniques and production options. The course also provides students the opportunity to conceptualize, report for and produce a group multimedia project. The course emphasizes writing skills for online media.

**Grading**

90% and above = A  
80% and above = B  
70% and above = C  
60% and above = D  
59% and below = F

**Assignment and Participation Policy**

Students who know they are going to be absent must turn in assignments before the due date. Assignments must be turned in on paper at the start of the class period on which the assignment is due. E-mailed assignments are not accepted (other than the multimedia project).

- Class attendance is vital. Students who miss class more than two times risk a grade reduction (for example, an “A” becomes a “B” and so on.)

- Students who have a serious or prolonged illness should communicate about it with the instructor and provide a doctor's explanation if you miss more than two class sessions. Students with an excused absence may make up missed work. It is not necessary to bring an explanation or doctor's note for a brief illness such as a cold or the flu.
- Students who do not provide an acceptable reason for missing an assignment cannot make up the points. Unexcused absences include missing class to study for a test, oversleeping, forgetting the assignment at home, not having the assignment completed and having to work.

### **Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism**

Work submitted for this course must adhere to the *Code of Academic Responsibility and Conduct* as cited in the *Handbook of Student Policies*: The academic community is operated on the basis of honesty, integrity, and fair play. Occasionally, this trust is violated when cheating occurs, either inadvertently or deliberately. This code will serve as the guideline for cases where cheating, plagiarism [written or oral], or other academic improprieties have occurred... Faculty members may fail the student for the particular assignment, test, or course involved, or they may recommend that the student drop the course in question, or these penalties may be varied with the gravity of the offense and the circumstances of the particular case (p.65). Please refer to [www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm](http://www.ndsu.nodak.edu/policy/335.htm)

### **Special Needs**

Any students who need special accommodations for learning or who have special needs are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructor as soon as possible.

### **Assignments:**

1. As a group, students will produce a multimedia story package (that's BIG, BOLD and BEAUTIFUL) by the end of the semester. (10 pts. possible for each weekly assignment that builds toward the final product; 50 points possible for the final project)
2. Each student will develop and write an opinion/observation/commentary Web log (blog) that focuses on the multimedia world. Each student's blog will be published every other week (seven times during the semester) on [www.in-forum.com](http://www.in-forum.com). (10 pts. possible per blog.)
  - ❖ Students A – J will publish a blog Jan. 22
  - ❖ Students K – Z will publish a blog Jan. 29, and then the groups will publish on alternating weeks. Blogs must be posted to [www.in-forum.com](http://www.in-forum.com) by 9 a.m. Tuesdays. Instructors will grade the online version. Late points will be deducted.
3. Each student will write a reading reaction paper for each chapter of assigned reading in "Convergent Journalism." (10 pts. per reaction paper) Write one page per chapter.
4. Graduate students will research for and write a 10- 15-page research paper about an aspect of multimedia journalism. (Details to come later.) Topics should be approved by the instructor.

### **TENTATIVE SCHEDULE**

**Week 1, Jan. 8:** We are the first-ever convergence journalism/multimedia writing class at NDSU.

- Slide show of the best of convergence journalism nationwide (Deneen/Online News Association)

- Defining convergence/multimedia journalism: Let's think of it as telling a story in the richest, most complete way possible, using an appropriate layering of storytelling techniques and technology.
- Bonus! You have two instructors. Explain roles of Dr. Gilmour and Dr. Collins
  - ✓ **Assignment for next week:** Each student researches the convergence/multimedia journalism projects and practices of a certain university, ranging from MSUM to Temple University. Come to class prepared to give a show-and-tell presentation so students can see how varying universities approach convergence journalism courses and present student work.
  - ✓ **Read Ch. 1:** "What is Convergence?" and write a reading reaction piece (1 page).  
(Meet separately with graduate students last 10 minutes of class.)

**Week 2, Jan. 15:** Timeline of convergence journalism development; description of convergence models (Deneen presentation/discussion leader)

- Students present show-and-tell of university convergence journalism projects
- Discuss the types of story packages our class could tackle. Discuss specialization and teamwork.
- Introduce the concept of lateral reporting and lateral reporting plans.
  - ✓ **Assignment for next week:** Each student comes to class next week with two fully formed story concepts broad enough to keep all students in the class busy for the semester. Prepare a lateral reporting plan for each story concept. Present your story concept using your mass comm specialty: Web site design, newspaper writing, photography, broadcast reporting, radio reporting, magazine writing, page design, and so on. (Power Point is not an option.)
  - ✓ **Read Ch. 2:** "The Multimedia Assignment Editor and Producer" and write a reading reaction piece.

**Week 3, Jan. 22:** The good, bad and ugly of convergence journalism ( Deneen presentation/discussion leader).

- Students present project proposals in the media format of their choice. (A way for colleagues to learn your media specialty)
  - ✓ **Assignment for next week:** Read Ch. 3 and 4 and write a reading reaction piece.

**Week 4, Jan. 29:** Discuss story concepts proposed by students and choose one to work on for the remainder of the semester.

- Talk about student multimedia work roles, ethics, equipment, team coordination.
- Instructors will be hands-on with you in information gathering and production.
- Discuss potential publication and/or broadcast outlets for the story package.
- Generate assignment lists for the coming week.
  - ✓ **Assignment:** Read Ch. 5 and 6 and write reading reaction piece.  
Hand out grading rubric for upcoming weekly reporting/production work.

**Week 5, Feb. 5:**

**WE WILL NOT SAY, "I CAN'T DO IT." WE WILL SAY, "I WILL FIND A DIFFERENT WAY TO ACCOMPLISH MY GOAL."**

- Deneen leads discussion: Writing is still the foundation of converged media. “Technology helps ... but won’t save you from bad writing.” What do you think?
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.
  - ✓ **Assignment:** Read Ch. 7 and 8 and write reading reaction piece.

**Week 6, Feb. 12:** Begin with student progress reports.

- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.
  - ✓ **Assignment:** Read Ch. 9 and 10 and write reading reaction piece.

**Week 7, Feb. 19:** Begin with student progress reports.

- Deneen presents information about and leads discussion about putting together all the multimedia elements that allow mass communicators to tell a story the richest way possible.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.
  - ✓ **Assignment:** Read Ch. 13 and write reading reaction piece.

**Week 8, Feb. 26:** Begin with student progress reports.

- Deneen and Ross lead a discussion about the future of media and journalism.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**SPRING BREAK: March 3-7**

**Week 9, March 11:** Begin with student progress reports.

- Deneen presents information about and leads discussion about ....
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**Week 10, March 18:** Begin with student progress reports.

- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week. Promotion team should start work.

**Week 11, March 25:**

- Begin with student progress reports.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**Week 12, April 1:**

- Begin with student progress reports.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**Week 13, April 8:**

- Begin with student progress reports.

- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**Week 14, April 15:**

- Begin with student progress reports.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**Week 15, April 22:**

- Begin with student progress reports.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

**Week 16, April 29:**

- Begin with student progress reports.
- Break into work session/work groups in online journalism lab.
- Generate assignment/task lists for the coming week.

*(Course objectives modeled in part after the University of Southern California Annenberg School of Journalism and DePaul University convergence journalism course goals.)*