

# THOMAS CONNER, Ph.D.

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## Summary of courses designed & taught

### **GENERAL COMMUNICATION THEORY**

#### **Introduction to Communication**

*COMM 10 @ UC San Diego*

This flagship Communication course surveys the basics of human communication (and this unique department's particular approaches) and is a valuable vehicle for equipping all students with foundational perspectives on everyday engagements with mediating technologies as well as constructions and negotiations of social identity. (*A campuswide DEI offering*)

#### **Comm in the Wild!**

*COMM 190 (Junior Seminar) @ UC San Diego*

I designed this senior seminar as a means of applying the department's core theoretical perspectives — “institutions and power,” “culture and representation,” and “the person and the everyday” — to real-world observation and analysis. Built almost entirely around field work, students in this course visit numerous public places (a coffee shop, the primary campus pedestrian path, another classroom, San Diego's Chicano Park, and more) to conduct ethnography about how each of these perspectives is manifested within (and by) the spaces. Unique and rewarding!

### **MEDIA HISTORY**

#### **Media History**

*MSTU 2623 @ The University of Tulsa*

Surveying an astonishing amount of history, this course initially sprints through the centuries, collecting important insights about the evolution of communication media — from oral traditions and writing to print and broadcast — concluding in a midterm exam. In the second half, we focus entirely on the emergence of digital communication, with the birth of internet technologies and social media. Students then produce both a brief history of an existing social-media service and a "future history" speculating on the upcoming evolution of a selected medium.

#### **American News Media**

*COMM 109N @ UC San Diego*

A history of the origin of news, this course covers the professionalization of news gathering and the situation of journalism amid literary styles, social forces, and national politics. We consider the evolving culture of journalism and its organization, the economics

of news production, and the relationships between journalists and other social actors (such as government officials and social movements), as well as debating “media bias” and the notion of “objectivity.”

### **Arts Criticism in America**

*MSTU 4863 @ The University of Tulsa*  
*COMM 190 @ UC San Diego*

In this upper-class seminar, we examine foundational debates about cultural criticism and manifestos by contemporary working critics, before reading a significant body of critique of music, movies, and more, leading to considerations of YouTube reaction videos and the migration of pop-culture critique to social media. Students then spend several weeks producing their own studied critiques, which are discussed in peer-review class sessions.

## **CULTURAL STUDIES & POP CULTURE**

### **Media & Pop Culture**

*MSTU 3293 @ The University of Tulsa*

A course open to all majors, this survey of theories about popular culture begins by defining culture and what makes it “pop” (making visible the mediating stuff students swim in throughout their everyday lives). After glancing back at pop culture’s deep history, we consider major cultural theories from Adorno to Zizek, with students delivering regular analyses of pop-culture objects and two major deconstruction assignments. This course also features student-led design, leaving them to program three weeks of the course with topics submitted and voted on by the class.

### **Music as Social Action**

*MSTU 4863 @ The University of Tulsa*  
*COMM 190 and COMM 113T @ UC San Diego*

My most popular offering, this seminar surveys the contributions of popular music in the maintenance and circulation of social-movement discourses. Students first read the primary scholarship defining and analyzing protest songs, propaganda songs, and “socially conscious” music. This theory is then applied to a historical study of pop genres from early 20th century folk music to contemporary hip-hop. Students write concept papers, annotate playlists, and have the option of writing their own song as a final project.

### **Performance & Cultural Studies**

*COMM 111P @ UC San Diego*

I adapted this listed course to focus the primary inquires of both fields on the current historical moment, asking how the performance of individual and cultural identities had been reshaped by a greater usage of and reliance on digital communication platforms during the coronavirus pandemic. Mixing traditional theoretical readings with hot-off-the-presses scholarship about Zoom and ways social life had been increasingly digitized during lockdowns, the course resulted each time in rich engagement and stellar student performance.

### **English Literature (Honors)**

*ENG 1213 @ Tulsa Community College*

Your basic English lit course, hopscotching a subjective path through mostly American poetry and prose, with several stops at song lyrics along the way.

## **RESEARCH METHODS & ARGUMENTATION**

### **Media Inquiry**

*MSTU 3613 @ The University of Tulsa*

This methods course surveys research strategies particular to media studies. I set it up with an introductory boot camp first, perfecting scholarly literature searches and writing tactics. After that, students sample a variety of inquiry methods — quantitative, textual, and qualitative — producing annotated bibliographies and proposing research designs for each module, ending with a mini-conference allowing them to practice visual communication and public speaking.

### **Critical Writing I**

*MCWP 40 @ UC San Diego (Muir College Writing Program)*

The first of a requisite two-course sequence, MCWP 40 introduces students to the basic elements of academic argument and analysis. Students engage in close reading of selected texts, dissecting each for the (Toulmin) elements of argument. Students produce a synthesis of two scholarly articles followed by an analysis of a book-length argument.

### **Critical Writing II**

*MCWP 50 @ UC San Diego (Muir College Writing Program)*

The second of a requisite two-course sequence, MCWP 50 focuses on advanced skills of academic argument and analysis. Individual instructors design their own research themes for this course — my themes included “Ghosts in the Machine,” “Media & Materiality,” and “The Social Roles of Arts Criticism” — in which students select their own topic, producing a research proposal, an annotated bibliography, and an original, research-supported argument.

### **English Composition I**

*ENG 1113 @ Univ. of Central Oklahoma*

Introductory rhetorical strategies and argumentation

### **Freshman Composition I (Honors)**

*ENG 1113 @ Tulsa Community College*

Mastering the five-paragraph essay!

## **MEDIA SKILLS & ADVISING**

### **Interviewing & Communication**

*COM 311 @ University of Illinois-Chicago*

Designed to introduce students to various types of interviews, this class covers what most students expect from it (job interviews and journalism) as well as everyday interview contexts (healthcare, persuasion, etc.). Students discuss and practice nonverbal communication, listening skills, planning and conducting interviews, questioning strategies, and interaction factors.

### **Features Writing**

*COMM 3493 @ The University of Tulsa*

The hybrid of theory discussion and lab practice leads students from prerequisite news-writing skills into the more expansive styles available to features writing. Students balance reading selected examples of historical and current features with practice in writing their own, from personality profiles and interviews to entertainment reporting and criticism.

### **Editing for Print Media**

*COMM 3523 @ The University of Tulsa*

A traditional lab for practicing and mastering basic news-editing skills, from line editing and copy editing to story selection and headline writing. I also included a module dealing with the people skills of guiding and working with writers.

### **Faculty adviser**

*The Collegian @ The University of Tulsa*

During part of my work as an adjunct instructor at TU (2004-2005), I also advised the annual staff of the student newspaper, *The Collegian*, by coaching student journalists' daily practices and providing guidance through regular evaluation meetings and a weekly critique.

### **"Working With the Media" workshops**

Alongside my professional journalism at the Tulsa World newspaper, I led occasional workshops for local businesses and entrepreneurs seeking to learn basic skills in messaging and marketing through the news media. These events covered how to write news releases, how to engage with the right media personnel, and some behind-the-scenes understanding of the news production process.

### **Guest lectures**

I have been asked to guest lecture in numerous courses, in context of both the extension of my scholarly research ("The Spectrality of Vision: A Pepper's Ghost Story," COMM 107, UCSD; "The Life Cycle of Holograms," COMM 143, UCSD) and my professional journalism experience ("What Happened When Newspapers Met the Web," COMM 106i, UCSD).