



Performance & Cultural Studies

COMM 111P

Fall 2021

Section A00 / 61561

2-3:20 p.m. Tuesday/Thursday

Center Hall, room 220

and

via Zoom

(see details & schedule below)

Dr. Thomas Conner

tconner@ucsd.edu or via Canvas messaging

Office hours: 10-11 a.m. Wednesdays via Zoom (see Canvas for link)

Image from [AURA](#) by Shinya Takaoka

Course objectives

For nearly two years now, most of us have been learning, negotiating, and perfecting a variety of digital tools and practices for the continuation of everyday life amid an ongoing global pandemic. The shift from campus life to online networks was sudden and jarring. As the public-health situation currently allows for *some* easing back into physical, social encounters, it also provides us **a historical moment to seize and analyze**. Many of the communication practices and rituals altered or upended by digital lockdowns involved **renegotiations of precisely the discourses and practices explored within performance and cultural studies** — issues of self-presentation, identity performance, artistic expression, material embodiment, and an alleged boundary between real and virtual. By establishing among ourselves **a common set of concepts for thinking about the history, culture, and politics of performance in our collective social world**, we will then use them as lenses both to examine what has changed (practices that have been dialed up or down in the daily social “mix”) and what has been revealed (about ways modern life is already quite virtual). We will explore this through a hybrid pedagogy mixing physical and digital classrooms and a series of assignments designed to challenge your thinking, expression, and actual performance of your selves and your worlds.

Class modality

This class will be conducted in BOTH a physical classroom and Zoom sessions. One week we’ll be in the room in Center Hall; another week we’ll meet online. **Locations are marked clearly on the course schedule.** Pay attention to class announcements as we go.

The hybrid model has been chosen for pedagogical reasons, aside from existing public-health concerns. We should **stay aware of experiencing the aspects unique or comparable to each mode**. (That said, *each mode is closed*: when we’re scheduled to be in the classroom, students may not Zoom in, and when we’re scheduled to meet on Zoom, attendance counts the same.)

In the classroom: **Masks are required at all times.** Unmasked students will be directed to leave. Our assigned room is small and will not accommodate complete social-distancing, but whenever possible sit with an empty desk between you and other students.

On Zoom: Your webcam must be on throughout each meeting; you must be visible on screen and animated. Stay muted until you or the group is called upon to speak, and use the available functions to type comments & questions in the chat and to raise your “hand.”

Document deliveries & messaging will all occur via the Canvas website. All assigned readings will be available or linked here, and all written assignments will be delivered here.

Assignments & grading

Concept responses (four, 5 pts each) — 20 %

ACTivities (two, 15 pts each) — 30 %

Quizzes (five, 1 pt each) — 5 %

Engagement & participation — 5 %

Final project (performance 25 pts, report 15 pts) — 40 %

Late policy for assignments: Assignments will be graded down one letter grade for every 24 hours they are delivered past the posted deadline.

Academic integrity: Plagiarism means taking material from another source (published or unpublished) and presenting it as your own without proper citation. This is a serious academic offense. That means outright copying and/or rewriting of material, but it also means using someone else's ideas or *even turning in a paper you used in another class*. The University has strict rules and severe punishments for plagiarism and cheating. These will not be waived under any circumstances. If you have the slightest question about these parameters, ask me or contact the Office of Academic Integrity (academicintegrity.ucsd.edu). If you weren't capable of doing the work, you wouldn't be here. Don't blow it.

Course expectations

Arrive to each meeting prepared, having read and watched all assigned material.

Arrive with something to say. Don't just "read over" the material — engage with it. Bring us something to say, something to question, something to puzzle out together.

Arrive on time. Excessive tardiness will negatively impact your participation grade.

Attend all sessions. Quizzes and in-class activities or performances cannot be made up.

Engage and participate. Speak up & unmute. Post to Canvas discussions. Through any available media, demonstrate that you've thought about the concepts & ask questions of all of us.

Be courteous to all other students, respecting the magnificent diversity of experience a university education affords us. That means respecting differing ideas *as well as* different levels of comprehension.

Check email regularly. Changes to the course schedule and other announcements will be communicated to you via email.

Read the weekly Canvas announcement. I'll post one each Sunday, outlining the week ahead.

Come to office hours (via Zoom). This is a time for you to “drop in,” chat, and ask questions about course concepts or assignments.

Notify me of any needed accommodations. Students requesting accommodations for this course due to differing needs must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD, osd.ucsd.edu), which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged.

Readings & assignments

This schedule is available as a Canvas page & subject to changes. This document will not be updated; the Canvas page always will contain the current schedule & assignment information.

Week 0: Getting started

LOCATION: CENTER 220

Thursday-09.23.21

Before class:

- Read “A Student’s Guide to Performance Studies”

In class:

- Review syllabus, schedule, & tech requirements (for Zoom, Canvas, and online decorum)
- Introductions to performance studies & each other

Week 1 : Performance & performativity

LOCATION: CENTER 220

Tuesday-09.28.21

Before class:

- Read: Richard Schechner, “What Is Performance?”
- Read: Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research”
- Read: Diana Taylor, “Acts of Transfer”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Defining & situating performance

Thursday-09.30.21

Before class:

- Read: Richard Schechner, “Performativity”

- Read: J.L. Austin, “How to Do Things With Words”
- Watch: “Richard Schechner on Defining Liminal”
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmzMO72E7OQ>)

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Expanding & demonstrating the idea of performativity

Week 2: Liveness & mediation

LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM

Tuesday-10.05.21

Before class:

- Read: Peggy Phelan: “The Ontology of Performance: Representation Without Reproduction”
- Read: Philip Auslander, “Against Ontology: Making Distinctions Between the Live and the Mediatized”
- Watch: Marianne Kim, “Liveness: The Beginning of Performance”
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yKgRCFqJN4>)
- Read: Amelia Jones, “‘Presence’ in Absentia: Experiencing Performance as Documentation”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Comparing & contrasting live performance vs. mediation & archiving

Thursday-10.07.21

Before class:

- Read: Erving Goffman, “On Face Work”
- Read: Guilherme da Silva Machado, “Zoom in on the Face: The Close-Up at Work”
- Read: Rice et al., “A Pandemic of Dysmorphia: ‘Zooming’ into the Perception of Our Appearance”
- Read: Brenda K. Wiederhold, “Connecting Through Technology: During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic: Avoiding ‘Zoom Fatigue’”

In class:

- Analysis of & renewed practice with Zoom interface + group discussion

Sunday-10.10.21

Response assignment 1 — ‘Zoom fatigue’ critique: due by 3 p.m.

Week 3: Identity & self

LOCATION: CENTER 220

Tuesday-10.12.21

Before class:

- Read: Erving Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”
- Read: Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory”
- Read: Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness”
- Read: Syreeta McFadden, “Teaching the Camera to See My Skin”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Social identity performances in physical *and* mediated contexts

Thursday-10.14.21

Before class:

- Victor Turner & Edith L.B. Turner, “Performing Ethnography”

In class:

- We will meet, disperse to conduct ACTivity 1, then reconvene

Sunday-10.17.21

ACTivity assignment 1 — Public ethnography: *due by 3 p.m.*

Week 4: Drama & ritual

LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM

Tuesday-10.19.21

Before class:

- Read: Thomas Postlewait & Tracy C. Davis, “Theatricality: An Introduction”
- Read: Steve Dixon, “Performance and technology Since 1960”
- Read: Brenda Laurel, “Post Virtual Reality: After the Hype Is Over”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: History of staged drama & relationships with technology

Thursday-10.21.21

Before class:

- Read: Mike Poblete, “Building an Engaging Zoom World: Lessons From Dramaturging a Digital *Love’s Labour’s Lost*”
- Read: Simon Cottle, “Mediatized Rituals: Beyond Manufacturing Consent”
- Read & watch material TK in preparation for today’s special guest

In class:

- **Special guest: actor, musician & cultural historian Hershey Felder**

Sunday-10.24.21

Response assignment 2 — Hershey Felder: *due by 3 p.m.*

Week 5: Script & spontaneity

LOCATION: CENTER 220

Tuesday-10.26.21

Before class:

- Read: Rebecca A. Walker, “Fill/Flash/Memory: A History of Flash Mobs”
- Read: Allan Kaprow, “Assemblages, Environments, and Happenings”
- Listen: Allan Kaprow, “How to Make a Happening”
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iCM-YIjyHE>)
- Read: Black Hawk Hannock & Roberta Garner, “Erving Goffman and ‘The New Normal’: Havoc and Containment in the Pandemic Era”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: History & uses of scripts vs. spontaneous performance
- Group planning for ACTivity 2

ACTivity assignment 2 — Staging your own happenings: to be enacted during class 10/28

Thursday-10.28.21

Before class:

- Work with your group to produce ACTivity 2

In class:

- We will meet, disperse to conduct ACTivity 2, then reconvene

Week 6: Music & the stage

LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM

Tuesday-11.02.21

Before class:

- Read: Lawrence Grossberg, “Is Anybody Listening? Does Anybody Care? On ‘The State of Rock’”
- Read: Simon Frith, “Live Music Matters”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Performativities afforded by live music performance

Thursday-11.04.21

Before class:

- Read: Gelsey Bell, “Profound Connectivity: A Social Life of Music During the Pandemic”
- Read: Steve Benford et al., “Producing Liveness: The Trials of Moving Folk Clubs Online During the Global Pandemic”
- Read: Simon Frith, “The Materialist Approach to Live Music”

In class:

- Watch & analyze digital streams of “live” music concerts

Sunday-11.07.21

Response assignment 3 — Audience perspectives: *due by 3 p.m.*

Week 7: Bodies & images

LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM

Tuesday-11.09.21

Before class:

- Read: Thomas F. DeFrantz, “Bone-Breaking, Black Social Dance, and Queer Corporeal Orature”
- Watch: “Performance groups at Yale adapt to the pandemic” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnCaBg4CxUU>)
- Watch: National Youth Dance Co. of Scotland, “The Everchanging Everyday” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmT22RdonWo>)
- Read: Matthew Harris, “The Hologram of Tupac at Coachella and Saints: The Value of Relics for Devotees”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Going beyond face work to the digitization of full bodies

Thursday-11.11.21

Before class:

- Read: Neima Jahromi, “Will Holograms Solve the Social-Distancing Dilemma?”
- Watch: “PORTL 2.0 explained” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbQYqSM-Gwo>)

In class:

- View & discuss productions by Lemieux Pilon 4D Art
- **Special guest: David Nussbaum, CEO of PORTL**

Week 8: Protest & social change

LOCATION: CENTER 220

Tuesday-11.16.21

Before class:

- Read: bell hooks, “Performance Practice as a Site of Opposition”
- Read: Jill Dolan, “Theory, Practice, and Activism: Theater Studies and the Polemics of Performance”
- Read: Richard Schechner, “Global and Intercultural Performances”

In class:

- Lecture & discussion: Politics & protest as performed through digital cultures

Thursday-11.18.21

Before class:

- Read: Jacqueline Sheean, “A (New) Specter Haunts Europe: The Political Legibility of Spain’s Hologram Protests”

In class:

- Watch & analyze hybrid live/digital performances of protest

Sunday-11.21.21

Response assignment 4 — Performative protest: *due by 3 p.m.*

Week 9: Space & dimension

LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM

Tuesday-11.23.21

Before class:

- Read: Marko Djurdjić, “This Must Be the Place: Distraction, Connection, and ‘Space-Building’ in the Time of Quarantine”
- Read: Brandy N. Kelly Pryora & Corliss Outley, “‘Last Night a DJ Saved My Life’ @Dnice #ClubQuarantine: Digitally Mediating Ritualistic Leisure Spaces During Isolation”

In class:

- Watch segments from the film *Paris Is Burning* and #ClubQuarantine

Thursday-11.25.21

NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY

Week 10: Finales & futures

LOCATION: CENTER 220

Tuesday-11.30.21

Before class:

- Read: Eamon Costello et al., “‘The Pandemic Will Not be on Zoom’: A Retrospective from the Year 2050”

In class:

- Considering the future of performance
- **Final-project group performances**

Thursday-12.02.21

In class:

- **Final-project group performances**
- Wrapups & farewells

Finals week

Thursday-12.09.21

FINAL PROJECT REPORTS — Analysis of performances: *due by 3 p.m.*