

# THOMAS CONNER

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**Three decades of news-media and media-studies experience: Historical and cultural research studies of emergent digital platforms (holograms and augmented-reality displays) as well as extensive university-level teaching experience, plus 20 years in daily journalism as an editor and critic**

## EDUCATION

### **Ph.D. in Communication (Science Studies)**

University of California-San Diego, 2021

- *Dissertation*: “Learning to Live With Ghosts: Holopresence and the Historical Emergence of Real Virtuality Technologies”

### **M.A. in Communication**

University of Illinois-Chicago, 2013

- *Thesis*: “Rei Toei Lives!: Hatsune Miku and the Design of the Virtual Pop Star”

### **B.A. in Mass Communication**

University of Oklahoma, 1993

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

### **Lecturer**

UC San Diego, currently

- Hired immediately upon completion of my Ph.D. to teach entry-level courses (e.g., Introduction to Communication, spring 2022) and advanced seminars (American News Media, summer 2022) in the Communication department.

### **Associate instructor**

UC San Diego, 2018 to 2021

- Designed upper-level courses (Arts Criticism in America) and adapted listed offerings (Performance & Cultural Studies) for the Communication department. My protest-song course, Music as Social Action, has been offered as both a junior seminar and, because of its popularity, a larger lecture.

### **Instructor**

Muir College Writing Program @ UC San Diego, 2016 to 2017, 2019-2021

- Taught both segments of this required course in basic argumentation, Critical Writing I & II, including designing themes for the latter (“Ghosts in the Machine,” “Media & Materiality,” “The Social Roles of Arts Criticism”).

### **Teaching Assistant**

UC San Diego, 2014 to 2016

- Led autonomous discussion sections amid larger lecture courses (Introduction to Communication, Situated Practices, The Internet Industry) in Communication.

### **Adjunct Instructor**

University of Illinois-Chicago, 2008 to 2009

- Redesigned the Interviewing Skills course in the Communication department.

### **Faculty adviser**

*The Collegian* @ University of Tulsa, 2004 to 2005

- Advised student journalists in the production of this campus newspaper.

### **Adjunct Instructor**

University of Tulsa, 2000 to 2005

- Taught journalism courses (Features Writing, Editing for Print Media) alongside my journalism career.

### **Adjunct Instructor**

Tulsa Community College, 1995 to 2000

- Taught English courses (Freshman Composition I, English Literature) alongside my journalism career.

## **PROFESSIONAL MEDIA EXPERIENCE**

### **Pop Music Critic**

2010 to 2013 @ Chicago Sun-Times

- Featured columnist, writing music criticism, features, and news, as well as producing multimedia interviews and narratives, across the Sun-Times platform (print editions, website, my own blog), plus commentary on trends and issues.

1995 to 2002 @ Tulsa World

- Award-winning features coverage and arts criticism in this mid-sized market, writing everything from weekly previews and countless CD reviews to breaking news and long-form features.

### **Assistant Features Editor**

2005 to 2007 @ Chicago Sun-Times

- Planning, assigning, editing and proofing of several daily and weekly entertainment sections. Managing small staffs of writers (staff and freelance), copy editors and designers, as well as budgeting. I also served concurrently as **Music Editor**, overseeing the staff pop music critic, two staff writers, and a stable of freelance writers, assigning and budgeting features and reviews.

2002 to 2005 @ Tulsa World

- Planning, assigning, editing and proofing of entertainment and lifestyles sections. Co-managing a staff of 21 writers, copy editors and designers.

### **Online Features Editor**

2007 to 2010 @ Chicago Sun-Times

- Managed all features content at *suntimes.com*, including tailoring print stories for optimal web readership, generating engaging original content. Improved external performance (boosted unique visits, SEO, social media outreach) and internal (writer training, editor liaison).

### **Event producer**

Spot Music Awards, Tulsa, Okla., 1999 to 2005

- Created, planned, and produced this annual awards ceremony recognizing local musicians and marketing the Tulsa World's weekly A&E tab, the Spot. Boosted our visibility in a key demographic, advertising opportunities, and Friday readership.

### **Freelance writer**

- Long- and short-form features have been published in The Washington Post, DownBeat magazine, Obit magazine, Tulsa Voice, and This Land magazine. Other work has included a history of the Cain's Ballroom (Tulsa, Okla.) written for the venue, as well as bios and press materials for bands (e.g., the Boondogs, Flick).

### **Radio host**

KWGS, 89.5-FM (NPR affiliate), 1999 to 2005

- Writing and delivering brief music commentaries called "Warped Vinyl."

Early experience includes a year as a **Copy Editor** (Tulsa World, 1994 to 1995), a **Reporter** covering three communities (Community World, 1993 to 1994), a **Staff Reporter** covering all beats (The Del City Sun, 1989 to 1990).

## SCHOLARLY PUBLICATIONS

### **Peer-reviewed papers**

- Conner, Thomas. 2023 (forthcoming). "Rock and Roll Will Never Die: Holograms and the Spectrality of Performance." *Spectator*, 43 (1).
- Conner, Thomas. 2020. "Pepper's Ghost and the Augmented Reality of Modernity." *Journal of Science & Popular Culture*, 3 (1): 57–79.
- Conner, Thomas. 2015. "'Our Unseen Friend': Early Radio and the Tuning In of Woody Guthrie's Performing Persona." *Woody Guthrie Annual*, 1 (1).
- Conner, Thomas. & Jones, Steve. 2014. "Art to Commerce: The Trajectory of Popular Music Criticism." *IASPM@Journal (International Association for the Study of Popular Music)*, 4 (2).
- Conner, Thomas. 2002. "Dear Reader: A Pop Critic Responds to the Day's Mail." *ARTicles*, 7: 138-149.

## **Book chapters**

- Conner, Thomas and Sigrid Schmalzer. 2018. "Technology." In Alyssa Botelho, Daniel S. Chard & Sigrid Schmalzer (Eds.), *Science for the People: Documents from America's Movement of Radical Scientists, 1969-1989*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press: 155-176.
- Conner, Thomas. 2015. "Hatsune Miku, 2.0Pac and Beyond: Rewinding and Fast-forwarding the Virtual Pop Star." In Whiteley, S. & Rambarran, S. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Music and Virtuality*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press: 129-147.
- Conner, Thomas. 2007. "Getting Along: Woody Guthrie and Oklahoma's Red Dirt Musicians." In D. Joyce (Ed.), *Alternative Oklahoma: Contrarian Views of the Sooner State*. Norman, Okla.: Univ. of Okla. Press: 87-112.

## **Reviews**

- Conner, Thomas. 2022. Review of *Photography from the Turin Shroud to the Turing Machine* by Yanai Toister, *Technology & Culture*, July.
- Conner, Thomas. 2019. Review of *Robot Rights* by David J. Gunkel, *New Media & Society*, January.
- Conner, Thomas. 2016. Review of *Feed-Forward: On the Future of Twenty-First-Century Media* by Mark B.N. Hansen. JHistory, *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, December.
- Conner, Thomas. 2014. Review of *Writing the Record: The Village Voice and the Birth of Rock Criticism* by Devon Powers. H-1960s; *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, April.
- Conner, Thomas. 2014. Review of *How Does It Feel? Elvis Presley, the Beatles, Bob Dylan, and the Philosophy of Rock and Roll* by Grant Maxwell. H-1960s; *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities and Social Sciences*, November.

## **Other research**

- Conner, Thomas. 2001. "From Instinct to Intuition: Tracking Woody's HD." Paper and notes commissioned by the Woody Guthrie Archives, now part of the collection.

## ADDITIONAL RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

### **Laboratory of Comparative Human Cognition (LCHC)**

UC San Diego, 2013-2018

- Speaker and participant in this ongoing lab/discussion group, founded by Mike Cole.
- Presented myself as a digital hologram for a simulation experiment in June 2015.

### **Radio Preservation Task Force**

Library of Congress, 2014-2015

- Located historical radio recordings for this archival project, the goal of which was to collect materials from regional, noncommercial, and uncategorized radio broadcasts.

### **Creative and Collaboration Information Technology (CCIT)**

University of Illinois-Chicago, 2012-2014

- Collected, summarized, and presented historical information about the impacts of technologies on the American workplace

### **Audio dilation study**

Electronic Visualization Laboratory (EVL) @ University of Illinois-Chicago, 2012-2013

- Studied the effects of dilated audio (recordings slowed down without loss of pitch) on attention tasks and assisted group development of software that dilated two-way transmitted audio in real time
- Designed, managed, and conducted experiments on human subjects testing speech comprehension of dilated audio while performing attention tasks

## FELLOWSHIPS

### **Science for the People**

University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 2014

- Assisted in collection of historical materials and aided in organization of a one-time reunion/conference of this organization.

### **National Arts Journalism Program**

Columbia University, 2000-2001

- Conducted research at the Woody Guthrie Archives in New York City throughout this fellowship at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.

### **Pulliam Journalism Fellowship**

The Arizona Republic (Phoenix, Ariz.), 1993

- Studied news coverage and covered newsroom features beats during this summer internship and fellowship.

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Conner, Thomas, Tara Knight, and Raffi Kryszek. 2022. "From Scifi Imaginary to Tech Reality: The News Science of Holograms." Comic-Con, July 22, San Diego.
- Conner, Thomas. 2021. "Rock and Roll Will Never Die: Holograms and the Spectrality of Performance." First Forum 2021, USC Cinema & Media Studies, Oct. 29, online.
- Conner, Thomas. 2020. "Pepper's Ghost and the Augmented Reality of Modernity." ZOOMPOSIUM: Performance, Science & Technology, a virtual conference organized by the Australian National Centre for the Public Awareness of Science, Nov. 27, online.
- Jones, Steve, Andrea Guzman, Thomas Conner & Ekaterina Pashevich. 2020. "Human-Machine Communication: Ethical Perspectives," a panel at AoIR 2020, Oct. 5, online.
- Conner, Thomas. 2020. "The Gesture of Holography." Invited to join the panel

- “Holographic Art and the Animated Image: Histories and Conservation” at the College Art Association annual conference, Feb. 12, Chicago.
- Conner, Thomas, Songyi Lee, et al. 2018. “Presence in Practice: A Discussion About Presence via Telepresence Tech.” One of a dozen discussants on this panel of worldwide scholars assembled virtually for the attendees at the PRESENCE 2018 annual conference, May 21, Prague.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2017. “Holopresence: A theory for augmented modernity.” Presented at the International Communication Association annual conference, May 27, San Diego.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2017. “Holopresence: A theory for augmented modernity.” Presented at the biennial UCSD Science Studies Graduate Conference, May 19, UCSD, San Diego.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2017). “Holograms: Historical Ghosts in the Machines.” Presented at the History of Science Graduate Student Seminar, Feb. 25, UCLA, Los Angeles.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2016. “‘Our Unseen Friend’: Early Radio and the Tuning In of Woody Guthrie’s Performing Persona.” Presented at the Woody Guthrie Symposium, April 30, The Univ. of Tulsa, Tulsa, Okla.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2015. “All Eyez on Me: Virtual Performers and New Media Memories.” Presented at 2015 Cultural Studies Assoc. 13th annual Cultural Studies Conference, May 21-24, Riverside, Calif.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2014. “Hatsune Miku and the Design of the Virtual Pop Star.” Presented at the 4S / ESOCITE Joint Meeting, Aug. 20-23, Buenos Aires.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2014. “Virtual Pop Stars and the Digitization of Performance.” Presented at Theorizing the Web 2014, April 25-26, New York City.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2013. “Hatsune Miku and the Design of the Virtual Pop Spectacle.” Presented at 2013 Cultural Studies Assoc. 11th annual Cultural Studies Conference, May 23-26, Chicago.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2012. “An Unaccompanied Movement?: Listening for Protest Songs at Occupy Wall Street.” Presented at the National Communication Association conference, Nov. 15-18, 2012, in Orlando, Fla.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2012. “Rei Toei Lives!: Hatsune Miku and the Design of the Virtual Pop Star.” Presented at VisCom 26 (visual communication conference), June 20-24, 2012, in Midway, Utah.
  - Conner, Thomas. 2012. “Oklahoma’s Red Dirt Music and Its Debt to Woody.” Presented at the Woody at One Hundred: The Woody Guthrie Centennial Celebration, 1912-2012, March 10, 2012, at the Univ. of Tulsa (Okla.).

## PUBLIC SPEAKING

- Conner, Thomas. 2015. Keynote address. Presented at the awarding of the inaugural Changing World Prize, Oct. 11, 2015, at the Woody Guthrie Center, Tulsa, Okla.
- Conner, Thomas. 2012. “Woody@100: One Life, Many Legacies.” Presented Oct. 19, 2012, at St. Xavier Univ., Chicago.

## EDITORIAL SERVICE

- Ad hoc peer reviewer for the *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research*, 2019-present.
- Ad hoc peer reviewer for the journal *New Media & Society*, 2014-present.
- Annual reviewer of conference paper submissions for the Western States Communication Association, 2016-present.

## TRADE PUBLICATIONS & THEATER

### **Anthologized articles**

- Conner, Thomas. 2015. "Dispatches From the Weedpatch Camp." In Mason, Michael & Wall, Holly (Eds.), *A Voice Was Sounding: Selected Works from This Land, Vol. 5*. Tulsa, Okla.: This Land Press.
- Conner, Thomas. 2014. "The Ghost of Karen Dalton." In Mason, M & Wall, H. (Eds.), *A Voice Was Sounding: Selected Works from This Land, Vols. 3 & 4*. Tulsa, Okla.: This Land Press.
- Conner, Thomas. 2012. "Heaven and Heart: The Tense Past of Michael Been." In Mason, Michael & Brown, Mark (Eds.), *A Voice Was Sounding: Selected Works from This Land Vols. 1 & 2*. Tulsa, Okla.: This Land Press.

### **Books**

- Conner, Thomas, John Wooley & Mark Brown. 1999. *Forever Lounge: A Laid-Back Guide to the Languid Sounds of Lounge Music*. Iola, Wisc.: Antique Trader Publications.

### **Plays**

Conner, Thomas and John Wooley. 2009. "Time Changes Everything." Premiered June 25 as a featured production at the annual SummerStage festival in the Tulsa Performing Arts Center, with a dozen regional productions through April 2013. (A play chronicling two fictional conversations between folksinger Woody Guthrie and country bandleader Bob Wills.)

## AWARDS & HONORS

First Place in Arts Criticism at the 2002 Katie Awards (Dallas Press Club), plus consistent top-three showings in the annual awards from both Associated Press/Oklahoma News Executives and the Society of Professional Journalists, as well as several newsroom honors.

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