

THOMAS CONNER, Ph.D.

thomashconner@gmail.com | thomasconner.info

Professional resumé

- ◆ **Award-winning media professional with over two decades of experience** as a journalist, editor, and cultural critic, including senior management roles at the *Chicago Sun-Times* and *Tulsa World*, where I managed editorial teams, drove digital content strategy, and produced multimedia features across print and digital platforms.
- ◆ **Ph.D. in Communication specializing in emerging media technologies**, such as digital holograms and augmented reality, with widely published research in leading academic journals like the *International Journal of Communication* and *Spectator*.
- ◆ **Respected critic of music and culture**, offering tailored and insightful critiques of popular music (as well as TV, film, books, and more), which also fueled reflexive academic research into music criticism practices.
- ◆ **Highly skilled communicator and public speaker, adept at translating complex ideas** for diverse audiences, as evidenced by extensive public engagement.
- ◆ **Proven leader in journalism education and mentorship**, recognized for designing and teaching practical journalism courses. I have also advised student journalists and contributed to professional industry best practices.

PROFESSIONAL MEDIA EXPERIENCE

Freelance writer

- Long-form analysis and reporting, as well as commentary and criticism, for a variety of outlets, including recent (2024-present) contributions to the [Tulsa World](#) (newspaper), [The Pickup](#) (online magazine), and [The New Territory](#) (print magazine).
- Previous writing has been published in [The Washington Post](#), [DownBeat](#), [Obit](#) magazine, [The Forward](#), [Oklahoma Today](#), [Discoveries](#), and more, plus I was a longtime contributor to [This Land](#) magazine. Other work has included [a history of the Cain's Ballroom](#) for the venue, as well as various bios and press materials for bands (e.g., the Boondogs, Flick).

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 featured blog), plus commentary on cultural trends and issues.

Online Features Editor, 2007 to 2010 @ *Chicago Sun-Times*

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

Assistant Features Editor, 2005 to 2007 @ *Chicago Sun-Times*

- Planned, assigned, edited, and proofed several daily and weekly entertainment sections.

Managed small staffs of writers, copy editors, and designers, as well as budgeting. I also served concurrently as **Music Editor**, managing a stable of freelance writers and reviewers.

Assistant Features Editor, 2002 to 2005 @ *Tulsa World*

- Planned, assigned, edited, and proofed daily and weekly entertainment and lifestyles sections. Co-managed a staff of 21 writers, copy editors and designers.

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, grew advertising, and expanded Friday readership.

Pop Music Critic, 1995 to 2002 @ *Tulsa World*

- Award-winning features coverage and arts criticism, writing everything from weekly concert previews and countless CD reviews to breaking news and long-form features.

Radio host, KWGS, 89.5-FM (NPR affiliate, The University of Tulsa), 1999 to 2005

- Writing and delivering brief music commentaries called “Warped Vinyl.”

Early experience: **Copy Editor** (*Tulsa World*, 1994 to 1995), **Reporter** (*Community World*, 1993 to 1994), **Staff Reporter** (*The Del City Sun*, 1989 to 1990).

Anthologized journalism

- “[Dispatches From the Weedpatch Camp](#),” *A Voice Was Sounding: Selected Works from This Land, Vol. 5* (This Land Press, 2015).
- “[The Ghost of Karen Dalton](#),” *A Voice Was Sounding: Selected Works from This Land, Vols. 3 & 4* (This Land Press, 2014).
- “[Heaven and Heart: The Tense Past of Michael Been](#),” *A Voice Was Sounding: Selected Works from This Land Vols. 1 & 2* (This Land Press, 2012).

EDUCATION

- **Ph.D. in Communication**, University of California–San Diego, 2021
- **M.A. in Communication**, University of Illinois–Chicago, 2013
- **B.A. in Mass Communication**, University of Oklahoma, 1993

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Assistant Professor, Communication

University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, beginning Fall 2026

- Teaching introductory and upper-division courses in communication theory and media practice, as well as team-teaching within the college’s interdisciplinary core curriculum. Developing the Communication curriculum to expand cultural analysis and media literacy initiatives. Advising student media (writing, video, podcast).

Assistant Teaching Professor, First-Year Composition

University of Oklahoma, 2025-2026

- Teaching foundational courses in academic writing and civic rhetoric.

Visiting Assistant Professor of Media Studies, The University of Tulsa, 2023-2025

- Teaching lower- and upper-division courses in research, history, music, and pop culture. Designed and launched two new journalism courses, Making the News (writing and reporting basics) and Making Media (a management seminar).

Lecturer, Associate Instructor, Instructor, and Teaching Assistant, UC San Diego, 2014 to 2023

- Teaching theory in Communication and practice in the Muir College Writing Program.

Adjunct experience teaching writing and rhetoric at the University of Central Oklahoma (2024), interviewing skills at the University of Illinois–Chicago (2008-2009), features writing and editing at The University of Tulsa (2000-2005), and English lit at Tulsa Community College (1995-2000).

SELECTED ACADEMIC PUBLICATIONS

- Conner, Thomas. 2023. "[Rock and Roll Will Never Die: Holograms and the Spectrality of Performance.](#)" *Spectator*, 43 (1): 52-57.
- Conner, Thomas. 2015. "'Our Unseen Friend': Early Radio and the Tuning In of Woody Guthrie's Performing Persona." *Woody Guthrie Annual*, 1 (1): 18-40.
- Conner, Thomas & Steve Jones. 2014. "[Art to Commerce: The Trajectory of Popular Music Criticism.](#)" *IASPM@Journal (International Assoc. for the Study of Popular Music)*, 4 (2): 7-23.
- Conner, Thomas. 2002. "Dear Reader: A Pop Critic Responds to the Day's Mail." *ARTicles*, 7: 138-149.

SELECTED AWARDS & HONORS

[James Beard Foundation Journalism Award](#) finalist, 2026

- Beverage category, "Passing On The Nog-Off," *The New Territory* (Nov. 2025)

[Center for Community News](#), University of Vermont, 2025

- Grant and fellowship: funding and training support for student media

[Suraj Israni Center for Cinematic Arts](#) (SICCA), UC San Diego, 2023

- Research fellowship: funding for research and travel expenses

[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, Pulliam Charitable Trust, 1993

- Covered features beats during this fellowship at *The Arizona Republic*.

Arts criticism awards

- First Place in Arts Criticism at the 2002 Katie Awards (Dallas Press Club), plus consistent showings from both AP/Oklahoma News Executives and the Society of Professional Journalists.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Conner, Thomas. 2025. "Greenwood Rising: Immersion and Interpellation," [Oklahoma Humanities magazine, Spring-Summer](#): 14-19.
- Guest on [Star Warsologies](#) podcast, talking about "Holograms and *Star Wars*," Oct. 1, 2022.
- Comic-Con panel, "[From Scifi Imaginary to Tech Reality: The News Science of Holograms](#)," moderating with Prof. Tara Knight (U Colorado) and Raffi Kryszek (Proto Hologram), July 22, 2022, San Diego.
- Guest on *Hurdy Gurdy Songs*, Radio Free Brooklyn, ("[9/11 Songs](#)," ep. 146), Sept. 14, 2021.
- Keynote address, presented at the awarding of the inaugural Changing World Prize, Oct. 11, 2015, at the Woody Guthrie Center, Tulsa, Okla.
- Public talk, "Woody@100: One Life, Many Legacies," Oct. 19, 2012, at St. Xavier Univ., Chicago.

For my complete CV, as well as research, teaching, and diversity statements, plus writing samples, tech blog, and more, please visit thomasconner.info.