



# Performance & Cultural Studies

COMM 111P

*Fall 2022*

Section A00 / 90673

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

**MCC room 201**

**and**

**via Zoom**

(see details & schedule below)

**Dr. Thomas Conner**

[tconner@ucsd.edu](mailto:tconner@ucsd.edu) or via Canvas messaging

**Office hours:** 10-11:30 a.m. Wednesdays via Zoom (see Canvas for link)

*Image from [AURA](#) by Shinya Takaoka*

## Course objectives

For 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 us to ease back into more 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 and politics of cultural 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 MCC; another week we'll meet online. **Locations are marked clearly on the course schedule and in weekly Canvas announcements.** Pay attention as we go.

The hybrid model has been chosen for pedagogical reasons, aside from continuing 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:** As we begin, masks are no longer required in classrooms. However, fwiw, masking remains an effective measure for disease prevention and social comfort. Our assigned room is not large and will not accommodate complete social-distancing, but whenever possible sit with an empty space 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 into 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 online, and all written assignments will be delivered online.

# Assignments & grading

- **Engagement & participation** — 5 %
- **Concept responses** (four, 5 pts each) — 20 %
- **ACTivities** (two, 15 pts each) — 30 %
- **Quizzes** (five, 1 pt each) — 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](http://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 may not 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](http://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: MCC 201**

#### **Thursday-09.22.22**

*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: MCC 201**

#### **Tuesday-09.27.22**

*Before class:*

- *Read: Richard Schechner, “What Is Performance?” (inset boxes are optional)*
- *Read: Dwight Conquergood, “Performance Studies: Interventions and Radical Research”*
- *Read: Diana Taylor, “Acts of Transfer”*

*In class:*

- *Lecture & discussion: Defining & situating performance*

#### **Thursday-09.29.22**

*Before class:*

- *Read: Richard Schechner, “Performativity” (inset boxes are optional)*

- *Read*: J.L. Austin, “How to Do Things With Words” (*at least Lecture II*)
- *Watch*: “Richard Schechner on Defining Liminal”  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nmzM072E7OQ>)

*In class:*

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

## **Week 2: Liveness & mediation**

**LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM**

### **Tuesday-10.04.22**

*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-10.06.22**

*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-10.09.22**

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

## Week 3: Identity & self

**LOCATION: MCC 201**

### Tuesday-10.11.22

*Before class:*

- *Read:* Erving Goffman, “The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life”
- *Watch:* The Media Insider, “Judith Butler’s Gender Performativity Theory Explained!” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ItPc2kPaxb0>)
- *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-10.13.22

*Before class:*

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

*In class:*

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

### Sunday-10.16.22

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

## Week 4: Drama & ritual

**LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM**

### Tuesday-10.18.22

*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-10.20.22

*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 (to come) in preparation for today’s special guest*

*In class:*

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

**Sunday-10.23.22**

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

**Week 5: Script & spontaneity**

**LOCATION: MCC 201**

**Tuesday-10.25.22**

*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-YljyHE>)
- *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-10.27.22**

*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-11.01.22**

*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-11.03.22**

*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, “Live Music Matters”

*In class:*

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

**Sunday-11.06.22**

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

## **Week 7: Bodies & images**

**Tuesday-11.08.22**

**LOCATION: UCSD DESIGN & INNOVATION BLDG.**

*Before class:*

- *Read*: Guo Freeman & Divine Maloney, “Body, Avatar, and Me: The Presentation and Perception of Self in Social Virtual Reality”
- *Read*: “A tour of UCSD’s new Design and Innovation Building,”  
<https://coolsandiegosights.com/2022/03/22/a-tour-of-ucsd-s-new-design-and-innovation-building/>
- *Watch*: “Design and Innovation Building Grand Opening,”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uvik4KcPYZw>

*In class:*

- We will NOT meet in MCC 201 today; instead, we will meet at 2 p.m. outside the east entrance of UCSD’s Design & Innovation Bldg. (just underneath the trolley station). We will then enjoy a tour of the facility and some demonstrations of mixed-reality technologies.

**Thursday-11.10.22**

**LOCATION: MCC 201**

*Before class:*

- *Read*: Thomas F. DeFrantz, “Bone-Breaking, Black Social Dance, and Queer Corporeal Orature”
- *Watch*: “Performance groups at Yale adapt to the pandemic”  
[\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnCaBg4CxUU\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnCaBg4CxUU)
- *Watch*: National Youth Dance Co. of Scotland, “The Everchanging Everyday”  
[\(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmT22RdonWo\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fmT22RdonWo)

*In class:*

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

## **Week 8: Protest & social change**

**LOCATION: MCC 201**

## **Tuesday-11.15.22**

*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-11.17.22**

*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-11.20.22**

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

## **Week 9: Space & dimension**

**LOCATION: ONLINE/ZOOM**

## **Tuesday-11.22.22**

*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-11.24.22**

**NO CLASS — THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY**

## **Week 10: Finales & futures**

**LOCATION: TBD**

- ***Pay attention to class announcements about where class will occur this week. Depending on the nature & number of performances, our time may split between online & in-person.***

## **Tuesday-11.29.22**

*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-12.01.22**

*In class:*

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

## **Finals week**

### **Thursday-12.08.21**

**FINAL PROJECT REPORTS** — Analysis of performances: *due by 6 p.m.*