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Media Inside Out conference honors pioneers and provocations in film and media studies

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Dozens of mediamakers and scholars will convene on campus for the conference [Media Inside Out](#) (April 25–26) to reflect and speculate on the field of film and media studies, its origins and its futures. As a focal point, participants will also engage, think and play with the significant intellectual work of UCSB professors Constance Penley, Janet Walker and Chuck Wolfe.

“The conference honors the careers of these three esteemed UC Santa Barbara faculty members who have deeply shaped our understanding of what film and media studies has been and might yet be. Invited participants will gather and think together with us over these two days, stitching connections across intellectual generations,” the event organizers said in a statement.

Focusing on the work of Penley, Walker and Wolfe, participants and honorees will discuss topics including film history, film theory, feminism, psychoanalysis, popular culture, comedy, documentary, environmental media, sex media, institutions and

spaces of scholarship, publishing and editorial work.

“I am so pleased that there will be a multiple days of collaboration and discussion dedicated to honoring the research and ideas of Constance Penley, Janet Walker and Chuck Wolfe. Together, they have helped to define not only what film and media studies is on our campus, but what it is as an academic pursuit,” said [Daina Ramey Berry](#), Michael Douglas Dean of Humanities & Fine Arts. “In addition to congratulating all three professors on their stellar careers, I join the organizers of the conference in paying tribute to their indelible mark on the field.”

As a provocation, “media inside out” invites immediate reflection on the hermeneutic, structuralist and discursive approaches that have been foundational to the film and media studies discipline. Looking at the ways certain frameworks have been generative or limiting allows for new appraisals of the discipline’s boundary logics as well as how its epistemological edges are defined and understood. The conference further prompts evaluation of the role of intellectual curiosity and promiscuity in shaping a discipline that continually upends itself.

The three honored professors have had distinguished careers in the field of film and media studies. Penley is the founding director and past co-director of UCSB’s Carsey-Wolf Center for media research and a founding editor of [Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies](#) (Duke UP), the world’s leading feminist media journal. Penley is the author, editor or co-editor of 10 books and has taught and lectured on her research around the world. Her books include “The Future of an Illusion: Film, Feminism, and Psychoanalysis;” “NASA/TREK: Popular Science and Sex in America; Male Trouble;” “Technoculture;” “The Visible Woman: Imaging Technologies, Science, and Gender,” and “The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure” — which has been translated into German and Spanish — with Tristan Taormino, Celine Parreñas Shimizu and Mireille Miller-Young.

Penley’s current book project, “Teaching Pornography,” is based on the pioneering course on pornography she developed at UCSB over 25 years ago. Her research and teaching on pornography led to the development of porn studies as an interdisciplinary academic discipline.

Walker served two terms as department chair and received UCSB’s Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Award in 2001. She is the co-founder and editor-in-chief of [Media+Environment](#) (UC Press). She has published as author, editor or co-editor six

books and numerous essays on documentary film and media, trauma and memory studies and environmental media.

Written from a feminist perspective, Walker's "Couching Resistance: Women, Film, and Psychoanalytic Psychiatry" (Minnesota University Press, 1993) analyzes psychoanalytic journal literature, marriage manuals, pharmaceutical ads and movies. Her later book "Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust" (UC Press, 2005) draws from interdisciplinary trauma studies and the heated debates or "memory wars" of the 1990s on the nature of evidence and the vicissitudes of memory. Walker's volumes are "Feminism and Documentary" (Minnesota UP, 1999), co-edited with Diane Waldman, and "Westerns: Films through History" (Routledge, 2001), "Documentary Testimonies: Global Archives of Suffering" (Routledge, 2010), co-edited with Bhaskar Sarkar, and "Sustainable Media: Critical Approaches to Media and Environment" (Routledge, 2016), co-edited with Nicole Starosielski. Her current book-in-progress concerns media, mapping and environmental justice.

Wolfe's research and teaching interests include film history and theory, historiography, American cinema and cultural history, documentary film and photography, comedy, adaptation and the history of early film sound. He is the author of two books on the films of director Frank Capra and has published widely on various aspects of the history of commercial, independent and documentary film production and reception in the U.S.

With his late colleague Professor Emeriti Edward Branigan, Wolfe co-founded and co-edited the American Film Institute's [AFI Film Reader Series](#), which between 1989 and 2022 published 41 volumes of new critical essays on topics of emerging concern in film, television and digital media studies. Viewed in composite, the AFI Film Reader Series charted new paradigms for scholarly inquiry in cinema and media studies over the course of three decades.

Wolfe received the Outstanding Pedagogy Award from the Society for Cinema and Media Studies in 2011, as well as a Distinguished Teaching Award from the UCSB Academic Senate in 1986, and a Professor the Year Award from the UCSB Mortar Board/Senior Class Council in 1992. He chaired the Department of Film and Media Studies (1994-1998), during which time plans were launched for the construction of UCSB's Pollock Theater, the region's premier public screening venue and current home to the public programs of the Carsey-Wolf Center. Wolfe served as associate

dean of humanities and fine arts in the College of Letters and Science at UCSB (2003–2008), and as the interim co-director of the Carsey Wolf Center (2015–2016). A member of the Board of Directors of the Society of Cinema and Media Studies (2006–2008), he also has served as a Rockefeller Fellow at the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, a scholarly advisor to the New York Center for Visual History American Cinema Project, and as a member of the advisory or editorial boards of Quarterly Review of Film and Video, Journal of Cinema and Media Studies, and Studies in Documentary Film.

The conference was organized by film and media studies doctoral alumni Joshua Neves, Jeff Scheible and Nicole Starosielski, in collaboration with faculty members.

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