



UCLA Arts' '10 Questions' series invites attendees to 'reckon' with the future

This year the public lecture-academic class will virtually bring together 30 leading minds

Avishay Artsy | September 29, 2020

As the world struggles to cope with a pandemic and the United States grapples with its embedded racism and inequality, trying to answer big questions like “what is justice?” “what is hope?” and “what matters?” can seem futile in one second and vital the next.

Boldly embracing the challenge of probing thorny questions, the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture presents “10 Questions: Reckoning,” the third iteration of its hybrid public program/academic class that brings together leading minds from across the university for interdisciplinary discussions about some of life’s essential questions.

“We are living through an extraordinary moment,” said Brett Steele, dean of the UCLA School of the Arts and Architecture. “A global pandemic, escalating climate crisis, and a historical racial reckoning are challenging the foundation of our nation and testing the fabric of our day to day lives. All of this is unfolding amidst a time of highly polarized public discourse and what is, perhaps, the most consequential presidential election this nation has experienced. This year, ‘10 Questions’ feels essential, its mission critical.”

Beginning Oct. 5 and continuing every Monday evening for 10 weeks, UCLA faculty members from disciplines as diverse as music, dance, theater, chemistry, anthropology, African American studies, gender studies, medieval studies, environmental law, public health and psychology will join UCLA Arts Associate Dean Victoria Marks to explore a fundamental question: What is kindness? What is hope? What is loss? What is love?

Each year, this arts-driven initiative transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries through a series of conversations that engage multiple viewpoints. Each session is organized around a single question designed to elicit discussion amongst a curated panel of UCLA scholars, artists, scientists, activists and researchers with the goal of creating vibrant conversations that not only seed greater understanding of the profoundly interdisciplinary nature of knowledge, but that — in seeing differently, together — help cultivate greater empathy and tolerance across our communities, as well as capacity to help tackle some of the foundational questions of our time.

Participants include faculty members such as Grammy-winning musician, composer, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador, and SGI Buddhist Herbie Hancock; art historian, media scholar and curator Chon Noriega; racial discrimination and racial justice expert E. Tendayi Achiume; artist, curator and artistic director Kristy Edmunds; opera, film, theater and festival director and MacArthur Fellow Peter Sellars; Kenneth N. Trueblood professor of Chemistry Neil Garg; American Indian and gender studies scholar Mishuana Goeman; sociocultural anthropologist Jemima Pierre; evolutionary anthropologist Daniel Fessler; author, screenwriter and producer Tananarive Due; writer and director Dominic Taylor; and cognitive psychologist and author Scott Weems.

“We are all asking profound questions right now,” Steele said. “This series allows us an opportunity to ask some of them together and embrace the differences that not only fuels the arts, but that are the backbone of a strong community.”

“10 Questions” continues an innovative program format for UCLA Arts. Both a free public event series and undergraduate course, the public will join UCLA students in the virtual classroom to experience firsthand vibrant interdisciplinary conversation with some of UCLA’s most esteemed faculty.

“The university is a hothouse for the development of new knowledge, a place where experts plumb the depths of understanding and expand the horizons of their individual fields,” said Victoria Marks, professor of world arts and cultures/dance and host of “10 Questions.” “And yet we know that it is in consideration of different ideas and perspectives that we build our capacity to hold complexity, a necessary ingredient for addressing our lived experience and the major problems of our time.

“The arts have always embraced complexity and possibility, so it is not surprising that UCLA Arts is the source and center for this program,” Marks said. “In bringing together some of UCLA’s most extraordinary faculty, a diverse group of students and members of the public from across our communities, ‘10 Questions: Reckoning’ calls upon our shared humanity and invites us to find deeper meaning and purpose as we tend to our lives, individually and collectively.”

This year, UCLA Arts is extending these conversations deeper into the community through a partnership with its Visual and Performing Arts Education, or VAPAE, program that will engage middle and high school students from five public schools from across the city in "10 Questions." Each cohort of students will generate their own classroom conversations and create artwork in response to select questions. They will then have the opportunity to share their artwork as part of the public program. UCLA Community School visual arts students will respond to and participate in the panel for "What is justice?"; L.A. County High School for the Arts theater students will respond to and participate in the panel for "What is power?"; Marina Del Rey Middle School dance students will respond to and participate in a panel the day before the U.S. presidential election on "What is hope?"; Venice High School media arts students will respond to and participate in the panel for "What is resilience?"; and Marshall High School music students will respond to "What is love?"

"By sharing the artwork of local middle and high school students with our community, UCLA encourages their creative expressions, while at the same time expanding our community and deepening our consideration of these important investigations," said Kevin Kane, director of VAPAE, who was a panelist in last year's "10 Questions" discussion "What Is community?"

"I can think of no better way to truly consider the import of these ideas than inviting this younger generation of artists to participate, engaging with university students and professors as they endeavor to understand these implications. After all, these young folks are the very ones that will be tasked with not only thinking about these questions but actualizing their possibilities," Kane added.

"There is nothing more powerful than the freedom to create," said Lindsey Farris, dance teacher at Marina del Rey Middle School and an alumna of the UCLA Department of World Arts and Cultures/Dance. "We use dance as a language for inspiring others, challenging perspectives and sharing stories of hope. The opportunity to hope is a powerful catalyst for change. It is also a powerful tool for self-preservation in an unprecedented time of social isolation. Our students will dance a collection of movement stories, sharing our hope for ourselves and our world."

Oct. 5: What is presence?

Ann Carlson, interdisciplinary artist; Mishuana Goeman, professor of gender studies and American Indian studies scholar; Tiffany Brannon, assistant professor of psychology

Oct. 12: What is justice?

Erin Christovale, associate curator at the Hammer Museum at UCLA and the co-founder of Black Radical Imagination; Ursula Heise, environmental narrative scholar, multispecies justice advocate and Marcia H. Howard Professor of Literary Studies; E. Tendayi Achiume, racial discrimination and racial justice expert and professor of law

Oct. 19: What is power?

Chon Noriega, professor of film, television and digital media, and art historian, media scholar and curator; Jemima Pierre, associate professor of African American studies and anthropology; William Boyd, scholar, environmental advocate and professor of law

Oct. 26: What is kindness?

Kristy Edmunds, artistic and executive director of UCLA Center for the Art of Performance; Vickie Mays, professor of psychology and health policy expert; Daniel Fessler, evolutionary anthropologist and director of the UCLA Bedari Kindness Institute

Nov. 2: What is hope?

Herbie Hancock, musician, composer, professor, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador and SGI Buddhist; Tananarive Due, author, screenwriter and producer and lecturer in the African American studies department; Ramesh Srinivasan, professor of information studies and innovation policy advisor for Biden/Harris 2020

Nov. 9: What is resilience?

Duane Benjamin, musician, orchestrator, arranger and professor; Tracy Johnson, molecular, cellular and developmental biologist and dean of the division of life sciences in the UCLA College; Kian Goh, assistant professor of urban planning, climate justice scholar and architect

Nov. 16: What is humor?

[Dominic Taylor](#), professor of theater, writer and director; [Neil Garg](#), Kenneth N. Trueblood professor of Chemistry; [Scott Weems](#), cognitive psychologist and author

Nov. 23: What is loss?

[Michael Eselun](#), chaplain at the Simms-Mann/UCLA Center for Integrative Oncology; [Jenna Caravello](#), artist and assistant professor of design and media arts; [Jorja Leap](#), adjunct professor of social welfare and expert in gangs, violence and systems change

Nov. 30: What is love?

[Sharon Hayes](#), artist; [Alicia Gaspar de Alba](#), professor of Chicana and Chicano and Central American studies, writer, scholar and activist; [Tyrone Howard](#), Pritzker Family Professor in Education to Strengthen Families and Director, UCLA Black Male Institute

Dec. 7: What matters?

[Peter Sellars](#), distinguished professor of world arts and cultures/dance, opera, film, theater and festival director; [Teo Ruiz](#), professor emeritus of history, writer, and medieval and early modern historian; [Anna Spain Bradley](#), UCLA vice chancellor for equity, diversity and inclusion, legal scholar and human rights advocate

Mondays, October 5 through December 7 from 7 p.m. –
8:50 p.m.

Live on Zoom

Free and open to the public

For more information and to RSVP, please visit

arts.ucla.edu/10questions.

Also: UCLA Arts will also launch season two of the podcast “[Works In Progress](#)” with a focus on the “10 Questions” initiative, speaking with panelists from each week to learn more about their perspectives and to deepen the conversation around each of these essential questions.

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