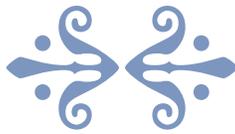


# EN M.A.S.K.



## Student Print Cultures, Sartorial Medical Practice, and H1N1 Influenza Crisis in California Higher Education, 1918–19

By Ryan Tripp  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE  
Faculty Association of California Community Colleges



Today we're experiencing a new way of living through a novel pandemic. People are actively collaborating in what they believe to be unprecedented measures to prevent transmission of SARS-CoV-2, more commonly known as the COVID-19 coronavirus.

In June 2020, after months of shutdowns and a reemergence of the virus, California Governor Gavin Newsom ordered all Californians to wear face coverings while in high-risk settings, including when taking public transit, seeking medical care, or in a classroom setting after growing concern that a rise in coronavirus cases had been caused by residents failing to voluntarily take precaution.

The 2020 pandemic offers challenges our predecessors a century ago did not have to consider. It currently plays out in a world economy that has come to a grinding halt, prompting many to work remotely with increasing pressures to reopen communities for business survival. Loud voices in an interconnected society driven by social media posts are unafraid to protest and be "anti-mask." With most institutions cancelling in-person instruction, higher education students have had their college experiences thrown into turmoil while trying to adapt to remote learning. Scanning historical records to discover similarities between the H1N1 influenza, commonly referred to as the "Spanish flu," is one way many choose to draw their lives into focus.

This essay contributes to, and reconfigures, previous studies on the H1N1 influenza crisis in California by focusing on the role that gauze masks played in student print as well as material cultures, campus governance, and educational ideas in 1918–19.

Such ideas followed California State Assembly passage of the Junior College Act, which authorized trade studies—but not separate community colleges—at the University of California. As disparate reports became an outbreak, the introduction of compulsory masks on the Berkeley campus provided ready-made sartorial vehicles for *Daily Cal* editors to narrate maternal medical socialization, student national consciousness, and performative mediation of an expansion in University administration as well as governance. The *Daily Cal* was just one of an array of student print contributing to appropriating masks for the negotiation, and dictation of, institutional responses to the 1918–19 H1N1 influenza crisis in California higher education.

### I

During the first week of October 1918, Lieutenant J.G. Littel, a member of the Leland Stanford University's Naval Unit, advised editors for the student newspaper, *The Daily Palo Alto*, to distinguish an outbreak of influenza in the Student Auxiliary Training Corps (S.A.T.C.) barracks from the worldwide Spanish influenza.

As influenza cases mounted over the next two weeks, the Leland Stanford University's Committee on Public Health imposed more and more rules on campus social interactions. In the pages of *The Daily Palo Alto*, these orders culminated in a startling headline: "GAUZE MASKS MUST BE WORN IN EVERY CLASS IS RULING."

Female volunteers for the Leland Stanford University Auxiliary of the Red Cross distributed the gauze masks. Yet, despite their best efforts, the flu claimed the lives of two students by mid-October. In a column adjacent to the obituary of the second victim, the editors attempted to quell panic with satirical exasperation: "...if it is necessary to get the Spanish influenza before you can get a good chicken dinner in the vicinity of the University, things have got to be changed, or else let's get the influenza!"

The State Normal School for Teachers at San Jose introduced gauze masks in the second week of October. Editors of *La Torre*, the school yearbook, printed a student's diary entries from the flu: "Times are

exciting. A mysterious disease is breaking out called Spanish Influenza...There is a rumor that some of the Normal students have the 'flu.' No one seems to know anything about it all."

The October 11 entry related to how the school administration convened an assembly on masks: "...the bell rang for assembly, and Dr. Dailey came in with a mask on. Imagine, a little square cloth over his mouth and nose. He looked as if he were muzzled. We were then sent to our classrooms, to make masks for ourselves... we were informed that Normal would continue en mask!" But the State Normal School did not continue "en mask" and closed until November 10. By the first week of December, a second wave of influenza cases resulted in another school closure through winter break.

On October 12, Columbia University philosopher John Dewey made his first public appearance at the University of California during an assembly in the Greek Theatre. Less than a week prior to his scheduled comments, two "flying cadets" had presented themselves to a Berkeley campus infirmary with "flu-like" symptoms. *Daily Cal* editorial staff attended the assembly and reported that, despite administrative assurances, sixty-eight cases in the infirmary were most likely not H1N1 influenza, "there probably has never been so scant a number of students at any University meeting in the past." Dewey offered a closing statement, "We were literally entertaining a new world and that we would meet the responsibility of the new world if we carry over the spirit of sacrificing self-interest to public interest."

Even as medical officials reiterated that the influenza outbreak was under "control," James Raphael and his *Daily Cal* editorial staff appropriated the Mills Foundation Lectures to prepare readers for an expansion of University governance across a democratic campus.

On October 16, undergraduate student Agnes Edwards Partin wrote to her father that her peers referred to the increasing number of ailments in Berkeley as "the floo or the flooey." Instead of campus closure, rumors abounded that "we are going to have to wear a sort of mask made of gauze that goes on over your nose & mouth—craziest looking things." The next day, *Daily Cal* editors explained that, according to John Dewey, the "laissez-faire policy" of the "modern political state...permits the individual to make his own way until liberties are abused." Any "theory of personal



MASKS POPULARIZE ASSEMBLY; BANDSTAND COMES TO LIFE

*Fall 1918 photograph of the Leland Stanford University Bandstand Assembly, The Quad Volume 26 (1920)  
Courtesy Stanford University Archives & Special Collections*

liberty," though, should require education in "health and well-being" as well as a "community duty to the citizen by furnishing facilities which will tend toward his own enlightenment." In Dewey's estimation, a "good government lays down the proper limits and spheres of activities of human beings, and prevents them from interfering unduly with the freedom of each other." Previous notions of "liberty" had been advanced by "industrial interests, who reserved the equalizing conditions of the laboring class...the community must not be injured by an excess, but must be equalized and helped by government."

On October 21, more than a week after the initial closure of the State Normal School at San Jose, University of California President Benjamin Ide Wheeler issued orders for all students to wear gauze masks in campus buildings and libraries.

Women in the University of California Auxiliary of the Red Cross embodied efficiency in the production of what became known as "black triangle" masks. Evaline Cutler, Student Director of the University Red Cross, informed James Raphael and his *Daily Cal* editors that almost 500 female volunteers aimed to make approximately 7,800 such masks. She further indicated that "every woman in the University is expected to work at Hearst Hall making, besides her own mask, several for the use of the men."

Agnes Edwards Patrin, one of the student volunteers, told her father "after we've washed dishes we're going to the Red Cross rooms and help make the gauze masks. Everyone is going to have to wear them tomorrow, even the aviators. The campus will surely be a funny looking place. I don't think they do any good myself, but maybe they do."

According to the *Daily Cal* editorial staff, if the origins of the outbreak were ultimately found in the Student

>> continued on page 16

Auxiliary Training Corps, then the H1N1 influenza was destined to become a masculine virus, remedied by protective maternal masks. Despite early cases of influenza afflicting female bodies, “the malady has seemed to spread much more rapidly among men... principally the S.A.T.C.,” masculine embodiments of the nation. But have no fear, for “as long as the students comply with the ruling regarding the wearing of the gauze masks and follow the instructions,” then no “drastic action” would be necessary. S.A.T.C. masks would be “collected every night at bedtime for the purpose of sterilization. Fresh masks will be distributed in the morning.” All students across the Berkeley campus were allowed one mask per day. Masks were “sterilized before distribution by students in the Hygiene and Pathology Department.”

On October 23, the *Daily Cal* reported that Red Cross Director Cutler had outsourced mask production to Mills College, where female students could not leave campus—“and in the same way no one is permitted to enter its precincts from the outer world.” Cutler offered “sufficient gauze for 1,050 masks” to women at the college via a contactless drop-off. After Mills College completed masks within 24 hours, “Miss Cutler thereupon issued gauze for twice the original number.” Lucy Ward Stebbins, University Dean of Women, extolled “the ready co-operation and intelligence of the University women in this emergency.”

The next day, Cutler disclosed that many students had found it impossible to sterilize their masks each night. She arranged for students to deposit soiled masks every morning in Wheeler Hall, where Red Cross women would provide a sterile one to each student. The “sterilizing of the soiled masks would be done at Hearst Hall every night under her direction. This plan will insure the complete sterilization of all the masks

and a greater degree of efficiency.” She requested the “co-operation” of these women “in the making of this second supply of masks.”

But a focus on the masks had its costs. By the end of the month, the University Red Cross had fallen “behind on all quotas for regular work, due to the fact that women have been working on influenza masks.” More “volunteer workers are needed to work on the masks” so that Red Cross women could devote their “time to regular sewing for the men in France...but work on masks had to be resumed because of the lack of volunteers. A small supply of masks must be made every day...to replace those which have already worn out.” All efforts had been made to fashion “influenza masks and pneumonia jackets.” Calls for volunteers continued, for there were “still 2,000 masks to be made.”

The *Daily Cal* also promoted maternal conservation efforts, in addition to the progression of medical organization, implementation, and practice on campus. The editorial staff announced that “new masks will not be supplied to the women and all who can possibly sterilize their own masks are asked to do so.” Only “men who could not find accommodations for sterilizing their masks” could obtain new ones in California Hall.

During the final days of October, *Daily Cal* reporters depicted the maternal alterations to technologies, scheduling, and landscapes across the Berkeley campus—all stemming from the masks. An “electric washer” and “laundry” had been moved to Hearst Hall, where Red Cross volunteer Edith Maslin oversaw the “rinsing and hanging of the masks...above the women’s swimming pool.” Alma Newell then took over the “sterilizing process,” while Lucille Gignoux supplied the “motor service and delivers two sets of masks to each company” in the S.A.T.C. and S.M.A. every evening.

Akin to the anti-maskers of today, certain faculty and students opposed wearing the masks. James Raphael and the *Daily Cal* editorial staff were baffled by faculty who allowed students to enter classes without masks because “this only endangers those who are complying with the regulations sent out by the medical authorities.” They questioned whether faculty and students misunderstood these orders, or whether it was “another instance of selfish indifference on the part of a small group of individuals.” This “selfish indiffer-



1918 photograph. *The Quad* Volume 26 (1920)  
Courtesy Stanford University Archives & Special Collections

ence” would undermine the purpose of the University president’s orders and the post surgeon’s mandate “that masks are to be worn in the corridors, halls and rooms of all University buildings. No one is to remove his mask until he is out in the open air.” The “co-operation” of students demonstrated “the effectiveness of the gauze masks” in “controlling” H1N1 influenza. “Students,” they insisted, “must wear the masks.”

Conversely, student editors for *The Daily Palo Alto* at the Leland Stanford University deployed print cultures of death to combat the contagion. During the closing weeks of October, Albert Leeds and Dorothy Driscoll not only identified the outbreak as “Spanish influenza,” but they also transformed brief obituaries into full-column stories.



Despite the ebbing of H1N1 influenza in Palo Alto, masks and ailments proliferated at the University of California. Masks simultaneously became a patriotic defense against H1N1 influenza and materialized the progressive pursuit of public welfare. An October 1918 letter to the *Daily Cal* editor insisted that “the gauze is such an excellent protection against the miscellaneous coughing and sneezing in the classroom that all instructors should co-operate with President Wheeler’s order in rigidly enforcing the wearing of the masks.” The donning of masks was “the duty of each student.” Although, the “reckless students” who supported the San Francisco anti-mask movement, as well as instructors who failed to dismiss them from classrooms, seemed to “have no thought for their own welfare, they might at least have consideration for the public health.”

President Wheeler invited the student body to attend a lecture by Dr. Wood Hutchinson, a fellow at the American Academy of Medicine, in the Greek Theatre. University medical officer Major William H. Brooks, substituting for the influenza-stricken University physician, would offer concluding remarks on “camp sanitation and its effect on the spread of influenza.” According to *Daily Cal* reporters, on October 26, at approximately “11 o’clock,” Hutchinson began his lecture to a masked audience, a signal performance in the progression of influenza. “Every death that California records below 15,000 and every influenza case below 300,000,” Hutchinson proclaimed, “this state can attribute to the wearing of the gauze masks.” The current outbreak, he noted, “is worse than the Black

Plague of the [Eighteen] Thirties...it is a disease of the young and middle-aged.”

In the Greek Theatre, Hutchinson narrated the rapid expansion of influenza from rural Spain into the wartime trenches, citing peasant “ignorance” of urban medical knowledge as a facilitator. He related that the “ignorant peasants in the districts which were ravaged believed the disease to be due to an astral influence, hence the name Spanish influenza.” The Leary influenza vaccine, “combined with the gauze mask,” halted the spread of the disease into the United States. Hutchinson concluded that influenza “is only transmitted from mouth to mouth and nose to nose... [please] use the masks.”

Shortly after Hutchinson’s performance, the City of Berkeley passed the oft-discussed emergency mask ordinance. On October 29, Chief of Police August Volmer told the *Daily Cal* that “every person appearing on the streets of Berkeley and upon the campus today without the protective gauze influenza mask will be arrested.” Volmer assured reporters that “any infraction of the mask ordinance” would result in misdemeanor arrests, punishable by a \$500 fine or 10 days in the county jail (“or both”).

The Welfare Committee for the S.A.T.C. and Naval Unit fulfilled this aesthetic progression of masks, scheduling performances and fashioning spectacles for Greek Theatre audiences. The *Daily Cal* gushed that the Committee had sponsored “one of the most enthusiastic gatherings that have ever assembled in the classic amphitheater.” No admission was charged, but “the ruling requiring all persons to wear masks” was “rigidly enforced.”

On November 16, five days after an armistice halted the first world war, the City of Berkeley repealed the ban on public meetings. Three days later, the City of Berkeley also revoked the emergency mask ordinance.

Yet, less than a month later, 18 new influenza cases—including 10 women in the University of California infirmary—prompted President Wheeler to order the return of the masks. “Gauze masks will again be worn by students in all classes and other University assemblages,” *Daily Cal* reporters averred, “because of the seeming recurrence of Spanish influenza on the campus.”

A week later, the University Red Cross declared that female volunteers had produced over 2,000 masks for

>> continued on page 18

all University students. Director Cutler also changed her plan: “the plan of supplying masks to non-military as well as military students has been adopted because of the fact that local dealers [such as Brasch’s] have exhausted their stock.” The University mask exchange cornered the campus market, so Cutler increased the price of masks from 5 cents to 10 cents apiece.

Certain universities, schools, and colleges in California entwined the paternal and maternal contours of progressive teachers’ duties with mask production. At the State Normal School for Teachers at San Jose, for instance, administrators required student-teachers to make their own masks. Editors for *La Torre*, the school yearbook, published the second half of a purported student’s diary drafted during the second wave of influenza—and masks—on campus. In entries dated January 6-7, 1919, the woman lamented that “... because we’re back at school, we have to wear masks all day long! Misery, misery!! We have to keep them over our noses, too, and boil ’em every night!! And wear them wherever we go. I have to go up town and get some gauze to make mine.”

*La Torre* editors reiterated that, especially among female students, mask mandates did not necessarily exempt this material culture from San Jose student sartorial politics. In additional sections of the yearbook, contributors recalled that “January found us again in our places but with the ‘flu’ masks still in vogue.” Graduating classes also “took part in the masquerade” and completed teaching credits “in spite of the masks.” In a sardonic aside, representatives of one class confirmed that, “just to be fashionable, several of our members caught the germ, but, fortunately, with no serious results.” The January 1919 cohort made it clear that, “as it was the custom at that time to wear masks, we did also.”

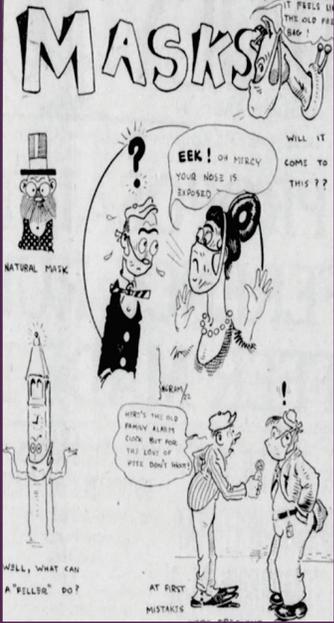
At the University Farm School in Davis, the student newspaper, *The Weekly Agricola*, began to cover the December 1918 return of masks—and H1N1 influenza—to the rural campus. Influenza and masks had engulfed the Farm School earlier that year. By mid-December, student editor David Cohn responded to a steady increase in infirmary and University House influenza patients with an agrarian adage: “the cat came back... We all hate to see it back, because we all found the mask to be uncomfortable, but they seemed to do the work.” Cohn and his reporters urged students to maintain their record of zero fatalities by

putting “on the masks again! Yes, they are uncomfortable and we all hate to wear them. But what is that compared to loss of life[?] You, yourself might be a victim.” He also published a poem that rhymed student anxieties over a possible rekindling of influenza, imagining the contagion as German retribution: “I am the influenza/I kill some people...but if you are not careful/I’ll get you again/I was ‘Made in Germany.’ ” Fears of a second wave dissipated by the time students returned to the Farm School from winter break. The State Board of Health, a “sunburst in a storm of death,” only required physicians and nurses “in contact with cases of influenza” to once more wear the masks. Farm School administrators adhered to these guidelines. *The Weekly Agricola* hoped to see a “renewal of school spirit. Dances, rallies and games are scheduled to make up for lost time.”

Over at the University of California, Berkeley, as the end of the influenza semester neared, the *Daily Cal* denied rumors that the campus would close early for winter break and that Pass/No Pass notations replaced course grades. One rumor was substantiated: a decline in the number of second-wave influenza cases during the month of December. Days before the end of the semester, a brief notice appeared in the *Daily Cal*: “the recent order issued by President Wheeler—that masks should be worn during classes—has been revoked due to the steadily decreasing number of influenza cases reported.” After this repeal, the number of cases increased yet again. The University of California extended winter break by one to two weeks and cancelled spring break, hoping to halt a resurgence.

In mid-January 1919, when University of California students returned to the Berkeley campus, they encountered new orders. In the pages of the *Daily Cal*, President Wheeler announced that “masks must be worn by all members of the University and employees.” This time, though, masks had to be worn within University buildings as well as “in groups out of doors,” including University assemblies. In addition, Wheeler banned all dances, receptions, performances, and social gatherings.

James Raphael also published a lengthy treatise, *All Must Mask*, by Dr. (Captain) Robert Legge, University physician and a professor in the University of California Hygiene Department. Legge contended that “the value of the gauze prophylactic measure for the prevention of respiratory diseases has been recognized by the medical



November 1918 "Masks" by J.L. Ingram  
 Courtesy Digital Daily Californian Collections, University Archives  
 University of California, Berkeley

profession for some years”—particularly against the “droplet method of infection.” He encouraged “dangerous as well as healthy individuals” to wear the masks and avoid crowds, securing a “double protection” against air droplets. “The mask, which affords the best protection,” Legge explained, “is made of three layers of butter cloth, large enough to cover the nose and mouth and secured to head by four

tapes...it is reasonable that masks are to be removed during eating periods.” Masks had to be worn indoors as well as outdoors for best results in abidance with the new ordinances. He included statistics from “one of the military organizations” at the University, where recorded cases of influenza purportedly dropped to almost zero after three days of mask-wearing. Legge concluded with a rhetorical question: “if the mask is prescribed for doctors, nurses and other attendants who wait upon the sick, as their one safeguard, why should any other argument be offered against its wearing to protect every one [?]” On Legge’s recommendation, the City of Berkeley began to debate the reintroduction of a citywide mask ordinance.

During the final two weeks of January, the *Daily Cal* reported a precipitous decline in the number of third-wave influenza cases on the Berkeley campus. But the editors could not place “too much emphasis” on the “order requiring the wearing of the gauze protectors.” Legge entreated readers to “not desire relaxation in masks” and insisted that the “lessening should not be taken as evidence that we should remove our masks.” Masks had not been worn during the winter break, which Legge cited as causation for the third wave. Editorial staff concurred, comparing “a score of cases” in the University infirmary during winter break to the two cases per day in late January. According to the editors, these records demonstrated that “the gauze masks have proven effective in the battle with influenza.” They railed against “a slackening of effort” and declared that “the gauze masks must continue to be worn.” Of course, masks should also be “sterilized daily” because “the masks must not only be worn but must be kept clean.”

Five hundred cases of H1N1 influenza, seven deaths, and four months of “gauze protection” ended with an

abrupt editorial catharsis in verse, aiming to destroy the memory of sexuality revised by the masks. In early February 1919, President Wheeler revoked the University of California mask orders, while the opposition of Berkeley Commissioner of Public Health Charles Heywood precluded passage of another citywide ordinance. Across the Berkeley campus, the *Daily Cal* noted that “placards have been placed on all bulletin boards stating that masks are no longer required.” Although 64 students and alumni perished from influenza, countless more died in extended families. Editors for *La Torre*, the yearbook for the State Normal School for Teachers at San Jose, admitted that “Hallelujahs rang through the air the day we could remove our masks.” Aside from yearbook retrospectives, these were the last major stories on masks published by student newspapers and periodicals in California higher education.



Less than a year after this premature ending to the H1N1 influenza crisis on California University and college campuses, James Raphael, undergraduate student editor for the *Daily Cal*, became a graduate medical student at what would eventually be known as the University of California, San Francisco. During the interwar period, Raphael established himself as a licensed physician in California. Across the Northern California Bay Area, Mills College still admits undergraduate women as well as gender non-binary and transgender undergraduate students.

Archival records reveal Albert Leeds, who helmed *The Daily Palo Alto* during the crisis, became an executive for Title Insurance. The fate of his managing editor, Dorothy Driscoll, remains a subject of scholarly inquiry for historians of Stanford University. The State Normal School for Teachers at San Jose is now San Jose State University, where editors discontinued the yearbook *La Torre* in 1965. The University Farm School in Davis expanded into the University of California, Davis, rechristening *The Weekly Agricola* as *The California Aggie* on the eve of the Second World War. The *Daily Cal* at the University of California, Berkeley, persists as the *Daily Cal*. The H1N1 influenza crisis foreshadowed multiple pandemics around the world, most notably COVID-19. Throughout this pandemic, student social media and publications generated novel iterations of shared governance in a public sphere revived, and reconfigured, by the masks.