

THE UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS ENGLISH GRADUATE ORGANIZATION PRESENTS:



# **LEARNING FROM FEAR**

**APRIL 25-26, 2025  
MEMPHIS, TN**

*Sponsored by the Deb Talbot Roundtable Fund and the Marcus W. Orr Center for Humanities*

# **The University of Memphis English Graduate Organization Conference**

## **Learning from Fear**

April 25th-26th, 2025

The University of Memphis

Memphis, TN

*Sponsored by the Deb Talbot Roundtable Fund & the Marcus W. Orr Center for the Humanities*

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## **Welcome to the 2nd Annual UMEGO Conference**

On behalf of the UMEGO executive board and the University of Memphis faculty, staff, and students, welcome to the second annual UMEGO conference in Memphis, TN!

### **Executive Board:**

**President** – Korbyn Peebles | PhD Student, Writing, Rhetoric, & Technical Communication

**Vice President** – Obri Richardson | PhD Student, Literary & Cultural Studies

**Treasurer** – Ifeoluwa Priscilia Awopetu | PhD Student, Applied Linguistics

**Secretary** – Ashton Alexander | PhD Student, Writing, Rhetoric, & Technical Communication

**Media Coordinator** – Emily Gillo | PhD Candidate, Writing, Rhetoric, & Technical Communication

**Faculty Advisor** – Sarah Ellis | English Graduate Office Coordinator

# Conference Overview

The University of Memphis English Graduate Organization (UMEGO) is a long-standing English department student organization that supports the advancement of the academic and professional goals of its members and provides opportunities for networking with other graduate students and faculty in the department. UMEGO proudly provides quality services to the English major graduate students. What differentiates UMEGO from other organizations is the ability to truly connect with graduate students, faculty, and the University of Memphis through events such as the UMEGO Graduate Student Conference.

**This year's conference theme, Learning from Fear, was inspired by a few driving factors:** one is the organizers' growing distaste for conventional academic practices and the exclusion, inadequate representation, and general sense of superiority that comes with them; another is the pervasive sense of fear and anxiety felt by so many of us since the COVID-19 lockdowns; yet another is a noticeable lack of discussions surrounding horror – particularly internet horror – in traditionally academic spaces.

Thus, the organizers sought to bridge gaps with this theme: bridge the gap between popular media and academic media studies, bridge the gap between academics and their surrounding communities, bridge the gap between lofty and sometimes unattainable academic expectations and real-world execution.

With this theme in mind, this year's conference brings together industry professionals, faculty, and graduate students across numerous disciplines such as Applied Linguistics, Communication, Literature, Creative Writing, Technical Communication, and Theatre Studies to present panels on fear as a pedagogical tool, the rhetoric of horror, fears of surveillance, the politics of fear, fear and race, fear and sex, and horror/fear aesthetics.

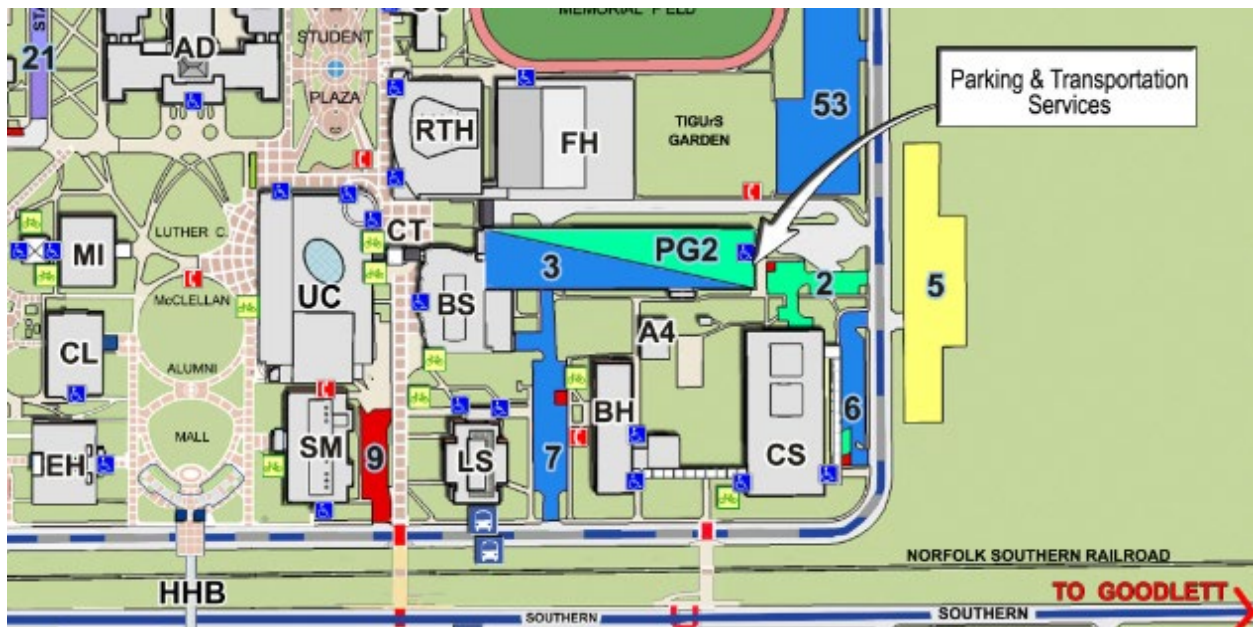
**Additionally, the conference's keynote speakers – Dr. Stephanie Graves of Vanderbilt University and Dr. John Edgar Browning of the Savannah College of Art and Design –** are joining us to hold a roundtable discussion with graduate students from the English Department's Applied Linguistics and Writing, Rhetoric, & Technical Communication concentrations.

The organizers would like to extend their sincere gratitude to all of those whose work and dedication brought this conference to life: Ms. Deb Talbot (sponsor of the Talbot Roundtable Fund) and Dr. Donal Harris, Director of the [Marcus W. Orr Center for the Humanities](#) (co-sponsor); the English Department Chair and Graduate Faculty Committee; **Sarah Ellis, Alonna McClendon, and Bridget Wells;** and UMEGO members **Ashton Alexander, Ifeoluwa Awopetu, Emily Gillo, and Korbyn Peebles.**

# Campus Maps & Floor Plans

The 2025 UMEGO Conference Roundtable and Keynote Address will be held in the University Center Theatre. The UC Theatre's address is 499 University Street Memphis, TN 38152. The Theatre is on the 1st floor, in room 145.

Parking for the University Center can be found in the Zach Curlin Garage at 463 Zach H. Curlin St. Memphis, TN 38152.



## Campus Maps & Floor Plans (Cont.)

The 2025 UMEGO Conference will be held in Patterson Hall. Patterson Hall's address is 530 Patterson Street Memphis, TN 38152. Sign-in and breakfast will be held in the Patterson Hall lobby. Panels will be held throughout the building, room numbers can be found in the program summary section.



## Campus Maps & Floor Plans (Cont.)

The nearest parking lot to Patterson Hall is lot 19, directly in front of Patterson Hall at the corner of Patterson St. and Walker Ave. Street parking may also be available along Walker Ave. Additional parking can be found across the train tracks at the corner of Southern Ave. And Echles St.



# UMEGO 2025 Keynote & Roundtable

## Friday, April 25th | UC Theatre | 6pm



**John Edgar Browning** is an internationally recognized authority on the horror genre, vampires, Bram Stoker, monster theory and monster pedagogy. Browning has published 20 academic and popular trade books on these topics as well as over 100 shorter works.

### "Profiling Dracula, Interrogating Ourselves"

As one who's made a professional career out of studying, writing on, and teaching *Dracula*, I don't miss a chance to learn from Bram Stoker's infamous Count, from print to visual media and beyond. This includes a widely unexplored albeit no less integral branch of Dracula's teratology in the cinema: the socio-political subtext of Dracula's victimology. What I've found is that Dracula's film progeny reveal the progression of Western political ideologies about normative sexuality, race, and class, or as Laurence A. Rickels carefully phrases it in *The Vampire Lectures* (University of Minnesota Press, 1999), "we will find that we must first be sure we know what is being sucked and what or who exactly is doing the sucking" (7). To put it simply, beginning with Universal's 1931 treatment of Stoker's novel, the markers of race, class, and sex have prompted studios to segregate particular victims into either visualized or censored representations, even going so far as to disqualify some victims from the privilege of being "turned" or, in some cases, even from serving as mere nourishment for Dracula. Dracula's procreatively- and consumptively-defined victimology reveals that the physical attack itself (and subsequent "turning") is a much more regulatory, even discriminatory process than previously accepted, one that continues to gesture toward outdated Victorian sexual politics concerning procreation and "good-breeding." Even as much as 40 years after the Universal film, Dracula's pathology would continue to denote a more ideologically conservative, heteronormative victim pattern. In sexually, racially, and socially encoding Dracula's victim pattern, film has created around Dracula a seriality that is as much criminological as it is mythic. For teachers and students interested in reassessing the censorial and representational development of Dracula's bite and the typology of his victims, the approach I outline allows us to uncover the complex ways in which blood politics manifest across Dracula's cinematic evolution. Interrogating Dracula's victimology in this way offers an insightful and relatively uncharted perspective into the ongoing negotiation between ideologically progressive and conservative forces at work in such cinematic narratives.

# UMEGO 2025 Keynote & Roundtable

## Friday, April 25th | UC Theatre | 6pm



**Stephanie A. Graves's** scholarship looks at film, television, and media from the perspective of rhetorical studies. Much of her work considers sites of intersectional identity, especially through the lenses of queer theory and queer rhetorics. Dr. Graves has a particular interest in horror and iterations of the Gothic, as well as cult media, inter- and metatextuality, and the grotesque.

# Session Guidelines

## **Membership**

No membership is required for proposal submission or conference attendance in 2025.

## **Registration**

No registration is required for panelist attendance for the 2025 conference. There is no registration fee for the 2025 conference.

Each panelist will receive a badge, which must be worn while attending conference sessions and events, and a conference program at the entrance table. The facilities and services of the conference are available only to panel participants, their guests, and administrators, faculty, and students from the local host institution and local host community. The Executive Board reserves the right to deny future participation in the conference to any chair or presenter who does not follow guidelines and procedures.

## **Conference registration for non-presenters**

Administrators, faculty, and students from the local host institution and the local host community who are not Chairing or presenting at the conference may attend sessions and activities/events. They will receive a program and badge at the entrance table.

Family members and friends who wish to attend only the session in which their relative or friend is presenting may attend and are asked to come to the entrance desk to get a badge.

## **Types of Sessions**

Regular Sessions are open-topic sessions lasting sixty minutes at which members present scholarly papers, presentations, or otherwise interactive engagements with the audience on topics related to the conference topic of fear and pedagogy. Each regular session has a Session Chair. Session Chairs may present in their own session, and are responsible for keeping time for the other panelists.

## **Guidelines for Session Chairs**

Session Chairs are initially chosen by the Executive Board, and each year following, will be selected by the current Session Chair at the end of their panel for the next year's conference. Session Chairs are responsible for keeping time for each panelist and assisting with technology as needed. Beginning with the 3rd annual conference, Sessions Chairs will also assist the conference hosts with proposal selection for their assigned panel.

## **Guidelines for Presenters**

One does not have to register to the conference to submit a proposal, but one must confirm their attendance by March 28th, 2025 to appear in the program. Proposals based on 300-word abstracts are due on February 21st, 2025. The Session Chair

and/or conference host and/or Executive Board is responsible for notifying applicants by March 7th, 2025. Please limit remarks to the time allotted, in order to leave time for questions - approximately 20 minutes per presenter.

Accepted panelists are expected to attend the conference to read at their scheduled time. If an applicant has a proposal accepted for the conference, we ask that they plan to attend and share their research or work. If one must cancel, please inform the Session Chair and/or conference hosts in a timely manner so that a replacement can be found. Papers cannot be read in absentia. If the Session Chair does not arrive, please delegate someone as a temporary chair/moderator and continue with the session, both for the sake of the audience and for the sake of the presenters who have made efforts to travel to the conference and present their work. In such situations, senior faculty/professionals are urged to take on this responsibility, modeling professionalism to junior faculty and students who may be participating.

# **Accessibility/Access Guidelines**

The University of Memphis English Graduate Organization is committed to making arrangements that allow all members to participate fully in the conference. All Session Chairs and presenters are asked to review the following information and take the necessary steps to make their sessions accessible to attendees who need them.

## **Room Setup**

All panel rooms, the registration area, and the poster session area are set up to accommodate wheelchairs. Patterson Hall is equipped with two elevators, as is the University Center. Please keep the entrance of each room clear for persons who may be using wheelchairs, canes, crutches, or motorized vehicles. People who are d/Deaf or Hard of Hearing and who use sign language interpreters or read lips need to sit where they can see both the speakers and the interpreter. Speakers should avoid speaking from a darkened area of the room so their lips and faces can be visible. Interpreters may stand close to the speaker or within a direct line of sight to allow the audience to view both the speaker and the interpreter.

## **Papers, Handouts, and Audiovisuals**

Speakers who bring an extra copy of papers or handouts for the audience should ensure that their font is no smaller than 12-point, and are asked to bring a few extra copies in large-print format (14-16-point font size on white paper with black text) and briefly describe the materials to the audience and allow ample time to distribute them. Speakers should indicate whether they want their materials returned. Consider the possibility that persons in the audience may have vision impairments. Allow ample time when referring to a visual aid or handout, or when pointing out the location of materials and briefly describe the materials.

## **Communication and Presentation**

Speak clearly and distinctly, but do not shout. Use regular speed unless asked to slow down by members of the audience, sign interpreters, or persons using real-time captioning. Practice timing your presentation to avoid having to speak too quickly. Since microphones can fail to pick up voices in the audience and because voices from the front of the room may be hard to hear from the back of the room, speakers should repeat questions or statements made by the audience. In dialogues or discussions, only one person should speak at a time, and questioners should identify themselves. We appreciate your consideration and implementation of these requests.

# Conference Program by Day

Please note that unless otherwise stated, all sessions are open to all conference participants. Rooms are set up for audio-visual accompaniments and have been prepared in advance to accommodate specific requests by the Session Chair and/or panelists. Panels in red are links to the hybrid/virtual panel Teams meeting.

## Friday, April 25th

### Keynote Address & Roundtable

6:00pm-7:30pm | University Center Theatre (Room 145)

## Saturday, April 26th

**Registration and Catered Breakfast | 7:30am-8:30am | Patterson Hall lobby**

**Fear & Pedagogy, Hybrid | Patterson Hall 229 | 8:30am-9:30am**

*Session Chair: Jennifer Byrd*

**Natalie Brown**, Mississippi State University: "You Don't Scare Me: Fear as a Pedagogical Tool in Picture Books"

**Jennifer Byrd**, University of Memphis: "Modeling Risk: Why Teachers Shouldn't Be Afraid of Failing in Front of Their Students"

**Cheyenne LaRoque**, University of North Texas: "Say it Well: Combatting English and AI's Artificial English by Embracing Translingualism in the FYW Classroom"

**Horrors of the Body, Virtual | Patterson Hall 229 | 9:45am-10:45am**

*Session Facilitator: Korbyn Peebles*

**Mak Johnston**, University of North Florida: "Crown Pig"

**Mercy McAndrew**, University of Wyoming: "Flicker and Fade: The Fears of Forgotten Bodies"

**Sasha Ravitch**, Sarah Lawrence College: "Body Betrays Itself: Fear, Grief, and Chronic Illness Represented Through the Posthumanist Gothic in Film"

**Is Rhetoric a Dying Discipline? Fear, Disciplinary Tensions, and the Future of Rhetorical Studies Roundtable Discussion | Patterson Hall 227 | 11:00am-12:00pm**

*Session Chair: Samantha Guajardo*

**AD Alston**, University of Memphis

**Kyle Chitwood**, University of Memphis

**Samantha Guajardo**, University of Memphis

\*\*\*Break for Lunch from 12:00pm-1:00pm\*\*\*

**Interactive Exhibits & Posters | Patterson Hall Second Floor | 1:00pm-2:00pm**

**Gabrielle Alston**, University of Memphis: "Digital and Technical Communication: The Rhetoric of Fear in the Digital Age" Interactive Exhibit, PT 229

**Samantha Guajardo**, University of Memphis: "Surveilling Borders: Rhetoric, Fear, and Immigrant Criminalization during the Trump Administration" Poster Presentation

**Jacob Williams**, University of Memphis: "Neighborhood Games: A Workshop on Writing Fear from the Places You Call Home," PT 221

**Representations of Horror in Media | Patterson Hall 227 | 2:15pm-3:15pm**

*Session Chair: David Rosenberg*

**AD Alston**, University of Memphis: "'You're Practically One of Us!': Incorporating a Womanist Horror Framework in African American Literature"

**Rachell Berry**, University of Memphis: "The Hyperobject out of Space: Materializing the Rhetoric of AI Fear"

**David Rosenberg**, University of Memphis: "From High Places to Sunken Places: Transplanting the Jamesonian Text"

**The Aesthetics of Fear, Virtual | Patterson Hall 229 | 2:15pm-3:15pm**

*Session Facilitator: Korbyn Peebles*

**Elizabeth O'Malley**, University of North Florida: "A Bad Taste in Your Mouth: Fear of Identification in *Mouthwashing*"

**Suparna Ghosh**, University of Calcutta, India: "Beauty that Kills: Tomie, the Male Thirst, and the Horrors of Desire"

**Cicek Usumezgezer**, Kırklareli University, Turkey: "Don't be Afraid of the Dark: The Entanglement of Horror and Sociology in the Classroom, the Screen, and the Anthropocene"

**Politics of Fear and "Otherness" | Patterson Hall 227 | 3:30pm-4:30pm**

*Session Chair: Chloe Robertson*

**Ifeoluwa Awopetu**, University of Memphis: "Hate Speech and the Fear of 'Otherness'"

**Ayesha Ahmed**, University of Tennessee Knoxville: "The Rhetorics of the Hijab: the Angles of Islamophobia and Fear"

**Chloe Robertson**, University of Memphis: "Trump's Counterpublic: A Study of (D/M)isinformation on Twitter/X and the Abuse of Rhetorical Velocity and Genre to Generate Fear"

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**Ahmed, Ayesha** | "The Rhetorics of the Hijab: The Angles of Islamophobia and Fear"

**Alston, AD** | "'You're Practically One of Us!': Incorporating a Womanist Horror Framework in African American Literature" & "Is Rhetoric a Dying Discipline? Fear, Disciplinary Tensions, and the Future of Rhetorical Studies"

**Alston, Gabrielle** | "Digital & Technical Communication: The Rhetoric of Fear in the Digital Age"

**Awopetu, Ifeoluwa** | "Hate Speech and the Fear of 'Otherness'"

**Berry, Rachell** | "The Hyperobject out of Space: Materializing the Rhetoric of AI Fear"

**Brown, Natalie** | "You Don't Scare Me: Fear as a Pedagogical Tool in Picture Books"

**Byrd, Jennifer** | "Modeling Risk: Why Teachers Shouldn't Be Afraid of Failing in Front of Their Students"

**Chitwood, Kyle** | Roundtable participant: "Is Rhetoric a Dying Discipline? Fear, Disciplinary Tensions, and the Future of Rhetorical Studies"

**Ghosh, Suparna** | "Beauty that Kills: Tomie, the Male Thirst, and the Horrors of Desire"

**Guajardo, Samantha** | "Surveilling Borders: Rhetoric, Fear, and Immigrant Criminalization during the Trump Administration" & Roundtable Chair: "Is Rhetoric a Dying Discipline? Fear, Disciplinary Tensions, and the Future of Rhetorical Studies"

**Johnston, Mak** | "Crown Pig"

**LaRoque, Cheyenne** | "Say it Well: Combatting English and AI's Artificial English by Embracing Translingualism in the FYW Classroom"

**McAndrew, Mercy** | "Flicker and Fade: The Fears of Forgotten Bodies"

**O'Malley, Elizabeth** | "A Bad Taste in your Mouth: Fear of Identification in *Mouthwashing*"

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