



Sveučilište u Zadru
University of Zadar



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE
AMERICAN
GOthic

Call for Papers: *Geographies of Horror*

Department of English Studies (University of Zadar) in collaboration with *The Society for the Study of the American Gothic* (SSAG)

Keynote speaker: Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Central Michigan University)

May 20-21st 2027, University of Zadar (Zadar, Croatia)

The study of horror has always been inseparable from the question of space. From the shadowed corridors of Gothic castles to contemporary digital voids, spaces in horror are never just passive backdrops. They function as active agents that shape perception, destabilize subjectivity, and collapse the distinction between interior and exterior, revealing how fragile our sense of spatial coherence can be. This conference seeks to understand how spaces become haunted - materially, symbolically, psychologically, and technologically, and how these hauntings articulate broader cultural anxieties, historical traumas, and epistemological uncertainties.

In Gothic and horror traditions, fear unfolds through space, guiding perception, and encounters with the unknown. Early Gothic forms, such as castles and monasteries, establish models of spatial excess, enclosure, and architectural anxiety, while the haunted house transforms domestic familiarity into something uncanny. In modern and contemporary horror, this logic extends to urban environments, where entire cities and infrastructures become haunted. While urban legends and other unsettling narratives embed fear in everyday life, abandoned malls, transit systems, and brutalist structures evoke concepts such as “non-places,” characterized by transience and anonymity.

At the same time, horror increasingly stages the breakdown of spatial logic itself. Non-Euclidean geometries, infinite corridors, and paradoxical environments destabilize perception and challenge epistemological certainty. In these instances, space becomes fundamentally unknowable, aligning with cosmic horror and philosophical pessimism. These concerns extend into digital and virtual environments, where video games, online narratives, and immersive technologies generate new forms of spatial horror. Phenomena such as *The Backrooms* exemplify liminal, endlessly reproducible environments that evoke both familiarity and existential dread. Simultaneously, haunted space becomes internalized within the body and mind, as psychological and body horror depict interiority as fragmented and invasive.



Sveučilište u Zadru
University of Zadar



SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE
AMERICAN
GOthic

With all this in mind, we welcome papers from across disciplines and media that examine the spatial dimensions of horror, including but not limited to:

- Gothic and classical haunted spaces
- Urban and infrastructural hauntings, including “non-places”
- Non-Euclidean, paradoxical, and incoherent spatialities
- Digital and virtual environments (games, online narratives, immersive media)
- The body and subjectivity as haunted spaces
- Ecological and environmental horror
- Spatial storytelling across literature, film, television, comics, and interactive media

The keynote speaker for the event will be Professor Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Central Michigan University). He is a Professor of English at Central Michigan University, where he teaches a range of courses on American literature and popular culture. He is the founder and president of *The Society for the Study of the American Gothic*, the founder and general editor of the peer-reviewed journal *American Gothic Studies*, and the co-founder and past chair of the *Modern Language Association Gothic Studies Forum*. He also serves as the associate editor in charge of horror for the *Los Angeles Review of Books* and is currently the general editor for Bloomsbury Publishing’s six-volume *Cultural History of Monsters* series.

His research focuses on the “cultural work” performed by the Gothic in its various manifestations - the ways in which Gothic texts and practices give shape to culturally specific anxieties and desires. This interest has led him from considering, for example, how nineteenth-and early twentieth-century American women made use of Gothic conventions as a strategy to express discontentment with their circumscribed roles to thinking about the ways contemporary monsters reflect shifting American fears and aspirations.

To date, he is the author or editor of 34 books and more than 100 essays and book chapters on the Gothic, American literature, cult film, and popular culture.

Abstracts of 250–300 words, accompanied by a short bio (approximately 100 words) and 3-5 keywords, should be submitted to geographyhorror@gmail.com .

The deadline for the abstract submission is October 1st 2026.

Selected papers focused on American Gothic and horror themes will also be considered for publication in the *American Gothic Studies Journal*.