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# POPCON! 2019

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM • Belknap Academic Building

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A conference on academia and pop culture  
presented by Honors Student Council



# Program Schedule

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Sessions	BAB 406	BAB 428
9:00 - 9:20 AM • Session 1	Dr. Rudy Clark	Andrew Grubb
9:30 - 9:50 AM • Session 2	Emma Radulski	---
10:00 - 10:20 AM • Session 3	Dr. Dwain Pruitt	Noah Smith
10:30 - 10:50 AM • Session 4	Hannah White	Hinzee Smith

## 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**Break for keynote lecture by Dr. Kishonna Gray in the Student Activities Center, Ballroom A. Dr. Gray will speak at 11:30 AM.**

1:10 - 1:30 PM • Session 5	Elizabeth Peña	Spencer Cox
1:40 - 2:00 PM • Session 6	Faith Fisher	Madi Gwyn Henderson
2:10 - 2:30 PM • Session 7	McKenna Jobe	Faith Fisher
2:40 - 3:00 PM • Session 8	Sidney Garner	Alex Hex
3:10 - 3:30 PM • Session 9	Sidney Garner	Danielle Graves

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 1

**Room 406** - Using Media to Teach Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing by Dr. Rudy Clark (*any pronouns*)

How can film, art, and music effectively teach concepts in psychiatric mental health nursing classes?

**Room 428** - (Un)Popular Culture? Looking Back on the Beowulf Movie Boom 1999 - 2007 by Andrew Grubb (*he/him*)

"Beowulf" is enshrined in our culture as a great literary classic: something we are generally forced to read in high school whether we find it interesting or not. Written in a language that many of us can barely identify as our own, exploring themes that seem more than a thousand years away from our lives, the poem is something many student merely survive. It is strange, then, that the first decade of the 21st century saw no fewer than four feature-length motion pictures based on "Beowulf": two bearing the name of the poem in addition to "Beowulf and Grendel" and "The 13th Warrior." Among this motley crew of box-office failures and sort-of cult classics, there are a number of thoughtful meditations about the Beowulf story that extend the academic endeavor of studying the poem. This presentation will examine the collective significance of these films as it considers the future of how 21st-century audiences engage with the poem and reckon with its cultural significance. It will also discuss the broader relationship between books and movies, questioning the common logic that uses value judgments to assess books as necessarily "better" than movies.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 2

**Room 406** - POZitive Representation? The Persistent Portrayal of HIV/AIDS as a Gay Disease by Emma Radulski (*she/her*)

I will examine three examples of the representation of HIV/AIDS in contemporary cable television. In each show, an HIV/AIDS storyline is introduced through a gay man. If the media constructs our understanding of gender and sexual orientation, what does the recurring representation of HIV-positive characters as gay men say about the contemporary reality of HIV/AIDS in America?

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 3

**Room 406** - All Hail the King!: The Black Panther and the Problem of the Black Superhero in American Comics by Dr. Dwain Pruitt (*he/him*)

The politics of black identity have been central to Black Panther stories since the character's debut, particularly since the 1970s. This paper analyzes the Black Panther's racial politics from 1966 to 2016, considering the complex ways in which creators, especially African-American writers like Christopher Priest, Reginald Hudlin, and Ta-Nehisi Coates, have attempted to portray T'Challa as authentically African and to have the King of the Wakandas engage with the problem of race and racial prejudice.

**Room 428** - Dear Old Nicki by Noah Smith (*they/them*)

An exploration of the themes and messages present in Nicki Minaj's first six works - three mixtapes and three studio albums.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 4

### **Room 406** - Who Run the World? Fangirls! by Hannah White (*she/her*)

For the better part of a century, generations of young people have obsessed over boy band icons such as The Beatles, The Monkees, Backstreet Boys, and One Direction. How has the conversation surrounding boy bands shifted throughout the years? What is the difference between the young girls who followed the Beatles and the young girls who followed One Direction? Why is one band seen as less legitimate than the other? "Who Run the World? Fangirls" aims to look at the evolution of boy bands over time and the ways in which their following of mainly young women have shaped pop culture across the globe. Furthermore, I hope to examine the effect that social media has on the ways in which fandoms connect, organize, and spread information. What does this mean for the future of boy bands? With the rise of K-Pop groups such as BTS, the definition of boy band might be expanding even further.

### **Room 428** - How Boss Baby Fits the American Weird by Hinzee Smith (*she/her*)

In this presentation I will showcase how Boss Baby has characteristics that cause it to fit into genre of the American Weird.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 5

### **Room 406** - Race and Paranormal TV by Elizabeth Peña (*she/her*)

This presentation was a result of an Honors seminar about Criticism of Paranormal TV. It provides a brief overview of common tropes and stereotypes about different racial and ethnic groups in paranormal TV.

### **Room 428** - Soccer in America by Spencer Cox (*he/him*)

Soccer is primed to become one of the most popular sports in America. By examining the Major League Soccer network and the United Soccer League, we can analyze the meaning of the influx of teams, money, and viewership. Examples include the MSL's transition from a local league to a seller league, signifying an improvement in league quality. This presentation will explore these changes.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 6

### **Room 406** - The Complexities of Pop Music by Faith Fisher (*she/her*)

A lot of people, especially intellectuals, dismiss the music they hear on the radio as just a bunch of trash, but in some instances, it can have a much deeper meaning than people realize. This presentation will focus on Taylor Swift's song "Look What You Made Me Do" and discuss its historical context (both to the artist and some extent, to the world as a whole) and then also how the music video and version of the song on tour enforce themes introduced by the historical context and lyrics themselves.

### **Room 428** - And They Would Have Gotten Away With It Too, If It Weren't For Those Meddling Tumblr Fans: The Queer Polyamory of the Scooby Gang by Madi Gwyn Henderson (*they/them*)

Scooby Doo has become a fan favorite and ever important part of pop culture within the 50 years, from the original T V show (1969) to the most modern reboot (2019). Every iteration has one thing in common: it focuses on the relationships between the four main characters, Velma, Daphne, Fred, Shaggy, as well as their talking dog Scooby Doo. Although Daphne and Fred's love is common knowledge, closer inspection reveals theirs is not the only significant relationship. If one looks closely enough, one can see that the four teens of the Scooby Gang can be read as romantically involved with each other, becoming a representation of queer polyamorous love and relationships.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 7

**Room 406** - The Family and Heritage of Peaky Blinders by McKenna Jobe (*she/her*)

Peaky Blinders follows the Shelbys, a family of gangsters in Birmingham, England starting just after WWI. While the family is the most powerful group of gangsters in Birmingham, they strive to expand their reputation, power, and control beyond city limits. This presentation will examine how the Shelby family's half-Romany heritage impacts their success; the wars they pick with other significant families; and how their family name is compromised multiple times.

**Room 428** - The Interaction Between the Walt Disney Company and China by Faith Fisher (*she/her*)

In this presentation, I will explore how China and Disney have impacted each other throughout history. The first full length animated movie in China was inspired by Disney's Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, the Pixar short Bao was inspired by Chinese Canadian culture, and the Shanghai Disney Resort has adapted to the wants and needs of Chinese culture and people, rather than being just like other Disney theme parks around the world.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 8

**Room 406** - Ms. Marvel, Haven't Heard that Name in Years! by Sidney Garner (*she/her*)

This presentation looks at the latest incarnation of Ms. Marvel: Kamala Khan. She is a Pakistani-American Muslim teenage girl. I will explore the intersections of her identities and how they create a unique take on heroism and teenage life.

**Room 428** - Fuzzy Thinking: America's Most Misunderstood Fandom by Alex Hex (*they/them or she/her*)

An exploration of one of America's most diverse and misunderstood fandoms - furies. Furies are fans of anthropomorphic art and media. This presentation will give an insider's look at who furies really are.

# Presentation Descriptions

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## Session 9

**Room 406** - Diverse Representation in Avatar: The Last Airbender by Sidney Garner (*she/her*)

A presentation on the various identities present in Nickelodeon's Avatar: The Last Airbender. I will go in to detail on the representation of women and people with disabilities and mental illness. I will also discuss the translation of real-world cultures into the cultures of the people of Avatar: The Last Airbender.

**Room 428** - Game of Thrones and Medicine by Danielle Graves (*she/her*)

A journey through historical medicine using the potions, poisons, and battle field injuries of Game of Thrones. If Westeros was set in our world, where would it be? When would it be? Let's figure it out together!

# *Thank you!*

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Honors Student Council is thankful for the support and sponsorship of the Anne Braden Institute, the Cooperative Consortium for Transdisciplinary Social Justice Research, the Department of Criminal Justice, and the Honors Program.

HSC would like to thank Dr. Kishonna Gray for joining us and making our first conference something truly special. For more of Dr. Gray's work, please visit her website at <http://www.kishonnagray.com>.

HSC would also like to thank the presenters - student, staff, and faculty alike - as well as the audience. Without the interest and support of the University community, this event would not have been possible.

Thank you!  
Sincerely,

