

# STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

46.1-2 | Fall 2024–Spring 2025

## STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

*Studies in Popular Culture*, a journal of the Popular Culture Association in the South, publishes articles on popular culture however mediated through film, literature, radio, television, music, graphics, print, practices, associations, events—any of the material or conceptual conditions of life. Its contributors, to date, from the United States, Australia, Canada, China, England, Finland, France, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Scotland, Spain, and the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus include distinguished anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, cultural geographers, ethnomusicologists, historians, and scholars in comics, communications, film, games, graphics, literature, philosophy, religion, and television.

A multidisciplinary journal, *SiPC* gives preference to submissions that demonstrate familiarity with the body of scholarly work on popular culture but avoid the jargon associated with certain single-discipline studies. *SiPC* accepts submissions on all forms of popular culture (American or international) studied from the perspective of any discipline.

Queries are welcome; direct editorial queries by email to [sipceditor@gmail.com](mailto:sipceditor@gmail.com).

Submit a Word manuscript on the journal's website, [www.studiesinpopularculture.com](http://www.studiesinpopularculture.com). Manuscript submissions should be uploaded on the journal's website as single Microsoft Word files, with the author's surname in the file name. Do not send a PDF file. Submissions typically total 5,000 to 7,500 words, including notes and Works Cited. Manuscripts should be double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font. Please note that the editing process may result in revisions that lengthen the essay. *SiPC* is indexed in the annual *MLA International Bibliography*, and MLA documentation is required. Authors should secure all necessary copyright permissions before submitting material. *SiPC* uses blind peer review. The editor reserves the right to make stylistic changes on accepted manuscripts.

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# STUDIES IN POPULAR CULTURE

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# 2024 WHATLEY AWARD

In memory of George Whatley, a founder and early president of the Popular Culture Association in the South, the editor and editorial board of *Studies in Popular Culture* annually recognize the article published in *SiPC* that, in their view, best represents the scholarly values Professor Whatley sought for the organization and the study of popular culture.

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The 2024 Whatley Award winner is  
Songs, Books, and Presidents: Cultural  
Capital in the Trump Era

BY

Ryan Hibbett

# Ray and Pat Browne Award for Popular Culture Studies

Each year for the PCAS/ACAS conference, students are encouraged to submit a complete reading copy of their paper in advance of the conference to compete for the student paper awards. Executive Council's Members-at-Large select the best paper in popular culture studies. These awards are presented at the Thursday night reception at the conference.

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The 2024 Ray and Pat Brown Award winner is  
The Bourgeois and the Rebel: Princesse Tam  
Tam and the Demise of Western Binaries  
through Colonialism

BY

**Bianca Martin**, University of Central Arkansas

Honorable Mention:

Some of My Best Friends are Black: Navigating  
Cinethetic Racism in TVDU

BY

**Janelle Gray**, The University of Texas at Dallas



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## From the Editor

At various stages in our lives, we feel like we belong, accepted and valued for who we are. Not infrequently, though, we encounter situations or individuals who make us feel like we are on the outside looking in, confused as to where we belong and uncertain about what lies ahead. The articles in this issue focus on lives lived on the fringes of society. From villains, antiheroes, aliens, and zombies to extreme foods or living in poverty, these pieces consider what it means to choose or be forced into living on the edge, and sometimes even over it, for an episode, a moment, or even a lifetime.

The first article, Maggie Warren's "Final Girls, Gruesome Feminism, and Futurity," examines the trope of the Final Girl, a female feature of many horror, and particularly slasher, books and films. Focusing on the illustrated novel *Cruddy*, by Lynda Barry, and the novel *My Heart is a Chainsaw*, by Stephen Graham Jones, and how these works present a new version of this horror survivor, Warren highlights the power of marginalized female characters to become empowered through both their roles as Final Girls and their efforts to seize control of their own lives and narratives.

In "Unspeakable Evil: Psychoanalyzing Lord Voldemort," Margie McCrary shifts our focus from the character battling the villain to the villain himself. McCrary distinguishes her analysis of the iconic villain of J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series from that of other literary critics by applying a psychological lens, including the theories of Sigmund Freud, to her reading of Voldemort. McCrary explores the significance of Voldemort's desires regarding his parents and the many Horcruxes he creates in his misguided efforts to gain power and immortality.

"Together at the Final Frontier: Interest in Space Influences Global Citizenship Identity," co-authored by Daniel Chadborn, Stephen Reysen, Thomas R. Brooks, Courtney Plante, Iva Katzarska-Miller, and Tracy Henley, continues with this psychological lens but shifts the focus from villains to belief in aliens and how perspectives on space and science may be changing moving forward. In applying social psychology to the interest and belief in aliens, the authors share their fascinating research regarding how individuals with such interests and beliefs reflect on and identify themselves, particularly in terms of global identification.

Luke Mueller, in his article "Poverty in Mauve: Aesthetics and the Discourse of Resilience in *The Florida Project*," also explores aspects of identity

and community, though his piece compels us to consider what it means to find community on the fringes of society. Against the backdrop of commercial Orlando, and the Disney World theme parks in particular, Mueller analyzes the film *The Florida Project* and its provocative critique of the costs of such manufactured fantasies and the impoverished individuals, including children, who often struggle to live in the shadows of these grand castles and resorts.

The following article, “Can You Eat That?: Food Challenges, *Man v. Food*, and *Hot Ones* as Comedic Rituals,” by Michael Ohsfeldt, considers a different sort of experience on the fringes of society—extreme food and televised eating challenges. By analyzing the rituals of such programs, Ohsfeldt argues that these challenges allow individuals to escape the mundane conformity of their everyday lives, even as aspects of those lives, from personal identity to consumerism, are challenged or reinforced. In this way, Ohsfeldt demonstrates how food challenges can be empowering to the individual while also reflecting and commenting on the ways indulgence and denial shape our lives and society.

Finally, in the last article of this issue, we consider the portrayal of the zombie—disturbingly human-like in ways but also the ultimate outsider—in Makenna J. Myers’s “Broken Mirrors and Shattered Windows: Zombies in Children’s Literature.” Myers offers a compelling breakdown of zombie depictions and their different functions in three categories of children’s literature: picture books, middle grade fiction, and young adult fiction. The author’s insightful analysis of representative works from each category reveals the ways zombies act as mirrors for each respective age group, reflecting and commenting on the needs, desires, and challenges young people face.

Each article in this issue provides an opportunity for its readers to reflect on their own experiences as insiders and outsiders at various moments in their lives and to consider those who have been in the opposite position from them at times. Furthermore, these engaging pieces highlight the value of the communities we find or create and the empowerment that comes with finding our place and embracing our authentic selves.

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