UNIVERSITÄT ZU KÖLN

Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung e. V.

Call for Papers for the 17th Annual Conference of the Gesellschaft für Fantastikforschung (GfF)

Violence and the Fantastic

University of Cologne, September 17-19, 2026

Organizers: Jun.-Prof. Dr. Judith Rauscher & Verena Wurth (University of Cologne)
Aylin Walder (TU Braunschweig)

Violence is an underlying structural element in fantastic narratives. Whether through depictions of intergalactic wars, epic battles, magical duels, monstrous creatures, heroic warriors, dystopian surveillance regimes, apocalyptic landscapes, conquests and systems of exploitation, physical assaults, psychological transgressions, or more subtle forms of abusive power: the fantastic explores violence in all its forms – as a destructive force, a threat to self and community, an expression of crisis, a tool of empowerment, a metaphor and an aesthetic device, and a driving force for/of narrative dynamics. At the same time, the fantastic, like the speculative, creates spaces where violence can be exaggerated, alienated, deferred, transformed, or renegotiated. Fantastic media allow for the exploration of what constitutes violence in different contexts, how and by whom violence is legitimized in various situations, and when it is deemed unacceptable. The fantastic sheds light on unequal power relations and structures that promote violence, highlights social and moral conflicts, and provides opportunities to imagine alternative forms of resistance – including nonviolent ones.

The conference **Violence and the Fantastic** explores how fantastic and speculative media portray, glorify, and critically reflect upon violence, how they use it for aesthetic effect, and negotiate it culturally. We invite contributions examining literary texts, comics, films, television shows, music, video games, board games, and live-action role-playing games. Presentations may be given in German or English.

The **open track** invites contributions on fantastic topics beyond the focus on violence.

Possible topics include:

- Depictions of physical, psychological, structural, epistemological, and symbolic/cultural violence in fantasy, science fiction, gothic, and horror
- Violence in utopian, dystopian, and (post-)apocalyptic narratives
- Violence in fantastic children's literature and Young Adult fiction
- Violence in radio plays, film, and television: spectacles of sound design and visualization
- Gamification of violence and mechanisms of violence in games, role-playing games, and LARP
- Violence and intimacy: Romantasy, family, partnerships, kinship, and alliances
- Violence as metaphor for social, ecological, or technological crises
- Violence as aesthetic principle: staging, glorification, and entertainment
- Violence in production and reception: fandom, market logic, and voyeurism
- Violence and power: domination, control, repression, and surveillance

- Violence and affect: physicality, vulnerability, anger, hatred, and indifference
- Violence and trauma: memory, processing, narrativization
- Violence and monstrosity: bodily boundaries, trans-corporeality, transformations, the Other
- Violence and gender, race, class, sexuality, and disability in fantastical worlds
- Violence and Nature: environmental destruction, slow violence, and extractivism
- Violence and politics: war, colonialism, imperialism, biopolitics, and necropolitics
- Violence and resistance: rebellion, activism, empowerment
- Violence and justice: law, punishment, revenge, and vigilantism
- Violence as ritual: sacrificial practices, institutionalization, and competition
- Violence and ethics: moral dilemmas, responsibility, and agency
- Violence and peace: pacifism, nonviolence, the overcoming of violence

Submission Formats

Individual Presentations

- Abstract (300 words)
- Short biography (150 words)

Panels

- Summary of the panel topic (300 words)
- Abstracts of the individual contributions (300 words each)
- Short biographies of the speakers (150 words each).

Abstracts may be submitted in German or English.

Please submit your proposals by **Monday, June 1, 2026**, to **american-studies@uni-koeln.de**.

You will be notified of the outcome of your proposal by the end of June.

Further information about the conference can be found on the following website:
https://anglistik1.phil-fak.uni-koeln.de/abteilungen-lehrende/literaturwissenschaft/juniorprofessur-amerikanistik-prof-rauscher/research/gff-conference-violence-and-the-fantastic