

Futurist Theory: Fear, Horror, and Terror(ism)

Interdisciplinary Graduate Conference
University of Guelph
TransCanada Institute
9 University Avenue East
November 26, 2010
9:00 to 6:00

The aim of this inter-disciplinary conference is to investigate the complex and diverse ways concepts of the future play out in Canadian, American, and other narratives including gothic, dystopian, horror, apocalyptic etc. How do terror and futurity intersect? This conference explores ways in which concepts of futurity intersect with narratives of horror or terror, or that analyze the implications of monstrous progeny. Forms of representation include cinema, literature, philosophy, psychology, sociology, and (geo)politics.

Keynote Speakers:

- Steven Bruhm, (University of Western Ontario) presents “Cell Phones From Hell”
- Sandra Singer, (University of Guelph) presents “Windows on Historical Expectations: Exploring Horror’s Narrative Punch”

“Windows on Historical Expectations: Exploring Horror’s Narrative Punch”

Abstract: When representing the past in the light of current conditions and future prospects, emplotted horror bears socio-cultural weight. Horror’s narrative effects are demonstrated by the strategic care film and fiction writers use in its deployment. The impact of horror, for instance, is shown by Steven Spielberg saving its narrative punch until the end of *Munich*, arguably after measuring the loss of horror affect by revealing its abject characteristics too early in *Saving Private Ryan*. This talk will discuss work representing terrorism and way by Spielberg and Virginia Woolf and Ian McEwan.

“Cell Phones From Hell”

Abstract: 1970s horror movies such as *When a Stranger Calls* and *Black Christmas* presented us with narratives in which young women were terrorized by murderers who phoned them from inside the houses where the women resided, thus making good on Avital Ronell’s claim that the telephone has always been associated with the diabolical and deadly. These films were remade at the beginning of the new millennium, but with a twist: the murderer now uses a cell phone and so is not rooted to a particular place or domestic context. This essay asks: How do cell phones change our sense of being seen and threatened? In what ways does cellular technology reimagine our sense of ourselves as gothic objects, beings whose lives are “on the line” when the line no longer exists?