

## Darkness in the American Imagination | virtual conference 4–8 September 2023

Darkness has always been defined in binary opposition to light. As Toni Morrison puts it in *Playing in the Dark* (1992): “Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable.” While darkness and light are mutually constitutive, the threshold between the two is ambivalent; it is blurry and changing. In addition to its symbolic dimensions, the darkness-vs.-light binary can also be taken literally: the early settlers feared the dark while electricity effectively banished darkness from cities, for example. The dark may be rife with danger, a metaphorical space of erasure, and a tool of obfuscation, but at the same time, the dark may provide protection, a space for subversion, and a place of beauty.

In view of the multiple meanings of darkness in the American imagination, we invite papers on topics including—but not limited to:

- darkness and the racial imagination
- darkness and oppression/marginalization/erasure
- the surveillance of darkness
- dark bodies and/in light spaces
- darkness in memory/dark roots: trauma, selective memory of the past, etc.
- the aesthetics of darkness in (audio)visual media (e.g. the use of shadows)
- the role of literal darkness in everyday life, in the history of urban development, etc.
- the cartographic imagination and darkness
- darkness and the historical imagination (e.g. the “dark age”)
- darkness in political discourse (e.g. notions of America “descending into darkness,” the Intellectual Dark Web)
- darkness in performances
- power outages and sports
- the aesthetics of dark skies
- imagining the dark web
- darkness and outer space, the deep sea, the forest, the underworld, etc.
- darkness in Indigenous cultures
- artificial darkness
- the role of blank screens
- (color)blindness in literal and metaphorical senses
- the dark and darkness in subcultures (gothic, metal, witchcraft, etc.)
- darkness, existential dread, and making fun of it
- darkness and the monstrous (ghosts, otherworldly creatures, etc.)

**Deadline for proposals: JUNE 11, 2023** (notification of acceptance by the end of June)

**We accept abstract proposals for individual presentations (≈ 300 words) or full panels (3-4 presenters, ≈ 250-word description of panel plus abstracts of all papers). Please, email your proposal to [popmec.darkness@gmail.com](mailto:popmec.darkness@gmail.com) as a single attachment (.doc, .docx, .odt) including name, affiliation (if any), and contact email.**

The conference will take place virtually, tentatively on 4-8 September 2023. Since we expect that presenters from all across the globe will participate in the conference, real-time presentations will take place indicatively between 4PM and 9PM Central European Summer Time.

Registration fees: reduced (student / unwaged) 10€ -- full 25€

If you have any doubt or inquiry, feel welcome to drop a line at [popmec.darkness@gmail.com](mailto:popmec.darkness@gmail.com).