Fandom and Neomedia Studies Association

9th Annual Conference

2 – 4 June 2023

Irving, Texas

Program Book

Friday

10:00am: Doors Open for Conference Day 1
        All events will be in the Irving Convention Center, 3d Floor, Panel Room 11.

10:30am: Opening Ceremonies
        Rabbi Jay H. Pustějovskeý Bennett, FANS Chair, University of Texas at Dallas
        Join the FANS Committee and presenters as we officially open the 9th Annual Fandom and Neomedia Studies Conference.

Block A: Anime and Fandom

11:00am: How to Talk about Anime and Manga with Friends and Loved Ones: Communication Skills for Hard Conversations
        Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University
        Created in response to attendee requests, this workshop teaches practical communication skills that are useful in navigating difficult conversations and making friends. Using psychology and other fields, we educate about the science of communication, give tips to apply the science, and then work with attendees to practice live in the moment. Attendees leave with immediately useful skills in talking to their friends and loved ones about their fandom.

12:00pm: Gods, Humans, and Nature: The Theology of *Princess Mononoke*
        Dr. James Knox, Dallas Theological Seminary
        There are many elements of the spiritual and supernatural in *Princess Mononoke* that are open to examination and interpretation. This panel will examine four main areas of interest: The nature and roles of gods and demons; Ashitaka's quest; tensions between different interest groups; and destruction as the start of new creation.

Conference Committee

Rabbi Jay H. Pustějovskeý Bennett, Chair
Andrew M. Tague, Co-Chair
Dr. Darren-Jon Ashmore
Dr. Angela Drummond, Dir. JEDI
Dr. Marc Hairston
Dr. Kyle Hammonds, Graduate Coordinator
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1:00pm: Welcome to the New World – How Technology Has Changed Fandom

      Alec Orrock, Chair, Animé Los Angeles

      With a click of the mouse or a swipe on the mobile device, today's anime fan has almost instantaneous access to more content than ever before. But it wasn't always that way. It's certainly been a long road getting from there to here. From the early days of small club meetings and top-loading VHS decks, to the beginnings of commercial home video releases, to the dawn of the Internet as we know it today. Join us as we discuss the evolution of anime fandom over the decades and the impact technology has had on the way we watch, read, and consume our content.

2:00pm: Dimensions of Escapism as Mediators of the Association between Consumption of Anime-Related Content and Desire to Learn about Japan

      Dr. Stephen Reysen, Texas A & M University at Commerce

      Dr. Courtney N. Plante, Bishop's University

      Dr. Sharon E. Roberts, Renison University College, University of Waterloo

      Dr. Kathleen C. Gerbasi, Niagara County Community College

      Presented by Andrew M. Tague, FANS Co-Chair, Texas A & M University at Commerce

      In the present paper we examine the relationship between three variables: Frequency of consuming anime-related content, using anime for escapism, and the desire to learn more about Japan. Self-identified anime fans completed measures of these three variables, with the results revealing that greater anime-related content consumption was associated with greater escapism and a greater desire to learn about Japan. We then tested, and found support for, a mediation model wherein two forms of escapism (self-expansion and self-suppression) mediated the association between consumption and desire to learn about Japan. These findings both highlight the utility of differentiating between self-expansion and self-suppression as distinct ways of escaping while also showing that escapism, which is often discussed in the context of its negative consequences, is also associated with learning about another culture and fan tourism. The findings support the notion that anime is a Japanese export which provides soft power to a country that is seeking to encourage cultural engagement.

2:30pm: Hikikomori: Social Isolation in Anime, Manga, and Japan

      Dr. William T. Nation, Johns Hopkins University

      Hikikomori, hiki, and NEET are descriptors thrown around in anime and manga. But what do they mean? In this panel, we link these familiar anime tropes with their real-world social and mental health concerns. We will discuss the history and research into social isolation and share the present and recent insights that psychology has given us. We will also talk through examples of how social isolation affects our collective fandom. This panel is meant to educate attendees

about how familiar anime tropes are influenced by real-life society and science. As a published researcher, the main panelist shares historical and present information about social isolation and how these tropes came to be. The panel then covers current research about social isolation and what it can tell us about anime and fandom.

<div align="center">Block B: Fandom and Your Health</div>

3:30pm: Kon-traindicated: Conventions and Your Health
  Robert Fox, A-Kon First Responder Manager, US Army Combat Medic
  Attending a convention already takes a good bit off planning – what to pack, what to wear each day, and budgeting for everything from travel to hotel to purchases. But what about planning for your health? This panel is a discussion of planning and executing steps to making attending a convention more comfortable and to reduce your chances of injury or contracting "Con Crud." The presenter will show you how to take your health, and the health of others, into consideration before, during, and after attending a convention. This will be followed by examples where the presenter did not follow his own advice and an opportunity to ask questions.

4:30pm: Mental Health in Anime, Manga, and Japan
  Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University
  This panel is meant to inform and educate about the depths of the links between mental health and anime/manga. A brief history of mental health concepts in Japan is given, as well as how this history has impacted anime and manga. Specific series and industry examples illustrate the diversity in how mental health affects the series we love.

5:30pm: "Believe It!": Breaking Down the Effects of Bullying in *Naruto* and *Naruto Shippuden*
  Joel Thomas, Tarleton State University
  Naruto was not always a beloved individual, and he was once hated for who he was and hunted for reasons beyond his control. By all rights, he should have gone down a very dark and destructive path, yet he defied the odds and became the 7th Hokage of the Hidden Leaf Village. The question is: How did he do it? This panel focuses on the mental health journey of our favorite knuckleheaded ninja. Learn how Naruto dealt with hate and trauma and grew into the world-changing force for good he is today.

6:30pm: Soccer Culture in Japan: *Blue Lock* and the World Cup
    Dr. William T. Nation, Johns Hopkins University
    Soccer in Japan is well known worldwide, if for nothing other than the fans and players being incredibly polite. But how does this culture translate to anime and manga? Join us as we discuss soccer culture in Japan and how it appears in our favorite series. We will also discuss how anime/manga have impacted soccer, among other topics. We will then cover fun topics relating to sports such as jerseys, culture, and education. No sports fandom is required!

7:30pm: End of Conference Day 1

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Saturday

10:00am: Doors Open for Conference Day 2

Block C: JEDI Studies

10:30am: The Anti-Fan Is Black: Black K-Pop Fan Labor in Digital Fandom Space
    Osarugue Otebele, University of California at Berkeley
    With the continuous international rise of K-pop, the current discourse on the industry considers not only its artistic model but also the labor of its fans. Much of this fan work often occurs on online media platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and YouTube, allowing fans from different geographic locations the space for collaboration and transnational fandom community-building. However, just as these platforms are spaces for forming communities with other K-pop fans, they can also engage in discriminatory practices. These practices leave some fans, specifically Black fans, to face the realities of segregated communities offline and in digital fandom spaces. This paper examines how Black K-pop fans attempt the (im)possible performance of fan and anti-fan identity while already racially positioned as the outsider, thus simultaneously cementing their belonging to the fandom while figuring themselves to the position of the anti-fan. By analyzing Black fan creations across social media platforms, this work positions "vigil labor," a wakefulness to the industry, as what aids Black fans in forging their status as both fan and anti-fan, thus simultaneously constructing their fan identity within and against the object of their fandom (the pop group) and the fandom itself. This investigation allows for an expansion on how Black K-pop fans engage with the industry not just as transnational spectators but also through their labor of disrupting fandom pleasure and producing their pleasure in the process.

11:00am: JEDI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion) at the Tabletop

        Dr. William T. Nation, Johns Hopkins University

        As conversations about JEDI topics permeate more aspects of daily life, tabletop gaming finds itself having increasingly pointed discourse around the current and historical legacy of difficult and exclusionary ideas. Why are Orcs and Goblins uncivilized savages with noticeably different skin color? What is going on with trading these Black and Brown meeples as a resource? These questions are but a few examples that indicate the depth of thought needed in grappling with the legacy of tabletop gaming. Past and current trends in the industry will be explored to contextualize better how thought and actions in the space have changed over time. This paper aims to explore some key gaming topics related to JEDI ideas, address current trends in the industry, and discuss ways tabletop gaming might integrate current thought and research to make spaces more welcoming. Ways to identify trends and examples in tabletop RPGs, board gaming, and other adjacent hobbies will be included. This text offers real-world examples of the pride and pitfalls of JEDI ideas in gaming based on clinical, educational, and institutional settings.

11:30pm: The Force Could Be Stronger with This One: An Analysis of the Black Male within the *Star Wars* Universe

        Dr. Frederick Gooding, Texas Christian University

        With respect to the category of women and minorities in the media, this presentation will conduct a racial analysis of the world famous fanboy franchise, *Star Wars*. While this franchise has only continued to grow in its prominence, reach, and cultural permanence, the question of race within its original three trilogy movies (nine films in total) is still one that requires further analysis. The franchise has shown growth in recent times with new spinoff series, but this presentation will concentrate on the *Star Wars* universe as defined by the foundational three trilogies. Specifically, this presentation will critically analyze the role, space and place of Black bodies within the *Star Wars* universe by qualitatively analyzing the roles of Jar Jar Binks, Lando Calrissian, and Finn. Such analysis will help us understand how race is leveraged within an idealistic fantasy space that theoretically should be unencumbered by any racial frictions that we know within our current society, seeing how the events that transpire within the nine *Star Wars* franchise movies occurred "a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away." Yet, we find that when analyzing these three relatively prominent Black male characters that the tensions and negative assumptions surrounding race relations within contemporary mainstream America are still manifest. This presentation then concludes with an introspective look as to what the reality of such racial implications hold for a fantasy space that so many revere and still hold dear in their imaginations.

12:00pm: The Invisible Fan: Anime Fans of Color

        Dr. Angela M. Drummond, FANS Dir. JEDI, University of Texas at Dallas

        Jeremiah Stinnett, Dallas College

        This panel will discuss the lack of intersectionality in anime/manga fan studies, the benefits of exclusive or safe spaces for fans of color, and the culture and fan-generated content that arise in such spaces. The definition of a fandom typically refers to an isolated and marginalized group with a shared interest that is outside of the mainstream, but the study of these so-called marginalized groups fails to consider the major forms of marginalization in the United States which are race and gender. People of color are othered in society and as fans find themselves othered not only in their racial groups by respectability politics but also within the fandom they choose to associate with through microaggressions and outright racism. Fan studies are only just beginning to explore the ways that fandom can also represent the negative elements of the society of which it is a microcosm, mirroring the same kinds of discrimination but also creating within itself further isolated groups within which separate cultural practices, artifacts, and even linguistic elements may arise. Surveying anime fans of color and examining their cultural production online provides evidence of distinct subcultures with particularized experiences of fandom not found in the dominant fan culture.

Block D: Special Guests

1:00pm: The Disruptive Energy of AI in Manga Creation: Rootport's *Cyberpunk: Peach John* – Outlier or Omen?

        Helen McCarthy, FANS Committee, Independent Scholar

        In March of this year, a new manga appeared in Japan from Shinchosa: 120 pages of full colour artwork, put together in two months using AI tools. It is the creation of a 37-year-old manga writer who uses the pseudonym Rootport and says he cannot draw. Rootport says his work is in the artistic line of Marcel Duchamp and Andy Warhol, a liberating disruption that enables anyone to make their own art for their own story. The manga even includes his 10-page how-to guide. But others see it differently, and outside the world of manga writers and artists are already being affected. Helen McCarthy first presented this snapshot of the situation at Anime Boston in April, less than a month after the manga appeared in Japan, and things are changing so fast it has been revised and updated since.

        At Ms. McCarthy's request, all attendees at her presentations MUST wear masks. Thank you for your cooperation.

2:00pm: Through the Torii Gate: Shintō in Miyazaki's Anime

        Dr. Deborah Scally, University of Texas at Dallas

        Picture a huge camphor tree ringed with zigzag strips of paper. Imagine a world full of little spirits that live in trees. See if you can count the number of red gates that look like birds and lead to shrines that are kept clean by families that have lived there for generations. These are some of the images of Shintō religion that you might see in the anime films of Hayao Miyazaki. His movies have a universal appeal, yet they are particularly Japanese and clearly reflect the main tenets of Shintō. This presentation will examine four of his most famous movies and show that they all represent aspects of Shintō religious practice and how the Western viewer's experience can be enhanced by a better understanding of what it means to live a life based on these practices.

<center>Block E: Gender and Sexuality</center>

2:30pm: Anime Psychology After Dark: Analyzing Everything

        Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University

        Fannish psychologists will analyze any series psychologically or die trying in this panel, even if they haven't seen it. Join our panel and steer their musings, maybe even stump them. You might even win something if you do.

3:30pm: BL Omegaverse as Sexual Technology: Race, Science, and Sex in the Omegaverse

        Luke Hernandez, University of Texas at Dallas

        Scholars in fan studies have critically approached the genre of Boy's Love (BL) Omegaverse material in the way of radical critiques of gender, sexuality, power, and consent. BL, also referred to as Men's Love (ML), are works that share the common theme of following the story of men who fall in love. This category of literature applies to fan works/fanfics derived from original works. Omegaverse is another category of literature that is more malleable, contradictory, and ambiguous. What commonly binds works that are labeled "Omegaverse," or have Omegaverse elements, is the invisible gender marker of A/B/O, which stands for Alpha, Beta, and Omega. A calling card of Omegaverse is that men, what we understand of what a normal man is, have the potential to become pregnant by an Alpha Male if they are an Omega Male. Because BL centers on Queer narratives combined with the complex gender politics of Omegaverse, BL Omegaverse offers a rich source of how fans and readers are engaging with queerness, sexuality, gender, and power in fan communities. Yet, I argue scholars in BL Omegaverse do not attend to issues pervasive in the genre such as racism, Eurocentrism, and patterns of biologically essentializing gender that affect the construction of gender and sexuality among fans. By equipping a queer of color

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analysis inspired by queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz, (1999) my intervention is how Omegaverse BL, located in Korean manhwa, Japanese manga, and online fan works, links gender and sexual truth to sexual technologies and technoscience. Gender may be a construct, but ABO status is truth mediated by science, which needs to be complicated. What is common in BL Omegaverse material is a page dedicated to explaining the mechanics and rules of Omegaverse for readers unfamiliar to the genre. By closely reading these pages from different sources, I work to unpack how different BL Omegaverses come to construct the canon in terms of gender, sexuality, and power under a feminist Science and Technology Studies lens and its implication for fans.

4:00pm: Mobile Anime Games and Waifu Collecting: Potential and Loss

Lawrence Brenner, Independent Scholar

The enormous rise in mobile gaming, especially gacha gaming, has lead to many opportunities in properties as well as voice-over. Free-to-play gaming had changed the market of games, making some mobile games more profitable than a one-time purchase even of some of the largest games for consoles. Though they have significant financial success, they can and do very easily become lost media due to the nature of the servers being shut down sometimes shortly after launch. As they are the stories and experiences are lost, unable to be played again. All the mechanics are lost as well, save for recorded video play throughs and the guides but the experience is something unable to be played again.

These games, aside from the financial benefits for the companies, have also been ways for more voice actors to get into games, including new talent, and for returning voice actors to reprise their roles in more than another season or movie. These are also ways that more people are introduced into fandoms via the many crossover events that happen quite often in mobile games and also via cosplay.

4:30pm: Missing in Action: The Female Artist in Japan

Nikita D'Monte, University of Texas at Dallas

My essay explores critically the biography of a female mangaka, Rumiko Takahashi, from the perspective of an international consumer of anime and manga. A large sweep of libraries and online archives show large amounts of research conducted on the male manga artist, however, very few articles focus solely on the works of female mangaka and their struggles in the manga industry. My project aims to not only to uncover and explore through close reading the works of one such female mangaka, Rumiko Takahashi, but also explore the general concept of the female body as an artist, as a character in anime and manga, and as women working behind the scenes in the production of anime. The field of anime and manga is notoriously infamous for an over-sexualization of its female characters and the

presence of female characters as mere bystanders with no agency over their own bodies. However, through an application of Laura Mulvey's "The Female Gaze," my essay explores how women are taking back this agency over their creative space and bodies. To bring in a more comparative lens while furthering the argument of female creative agency, this essay will also draw on the use of male pseudonyms as seen during the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British writing and how female Japanese mangaka very often employ this very method while publishing their works to avoid getting categorized as shōjo manga writers, the subject matter of which is considered frivolous and tailor-made for young girls. This project tracks the changes in subject matter of Takahashi from her earlier works to the most recent ones, looking at how the sociocultural, political, and economic aspects of Japan affected the creative works of artists, especially female artists. This essay will also look briefly at other female mangaka and trace their struggles as artists to showcase the general problems female mangaka and other female artists face when it comes to freely engaging in the creative processes.

5:00pm: FANS Q&A Session
    FANS Committee
    Join the effort to learn and share more information about fandoms and the neomedia they
        employ to engage and expand their areas of interest and to recruit new fans.
        Information about our work will be provided briefly before opening the floor to
        questions from those who are curious about what we do and how to join in our
        efforts.

5:30pm: Break

Keynote Address

6:00pm: Et in Arcadia Ego: Honoring Matsumoto Leiji
    Dr. Darren-Jon Ashmore, Chair, FANS Japan, Yamanashi Gakuin University
    Join Dr. Ashmore, long-time student and friend of the master of manga and anime, and
        others as we mourn the death and celebrate the life of Leiji Matsumoto.

7:30pm: Dinner Break. Doors will be closed during this time.

9:30pm: Doors open.

10:00pm: FANS After Hours: Movie Night with Helen McCarthy. 18+. Masks Required.
Join us After Hours when the professors have a little fun cussing and discussing the film-length anime, *Belladonna of Sadness*.

12:00am: End of Conference Day 2.

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Sunday

9:30am: Doors Open for Conference Day 3

Block F: Participatory Fandoms

10:00am: An Exploratory Study on Participative Content Creation in the Dream SMP
Heaven A. J. Madrangca, University of the Philippines at Cebu
Online spaces and the popularity of live streaming have allowed more simultaneous fan-producer interaction and boosted the visibility of fan-made content to the producers. An example is the Dream SMP (DSMP), a live-streamed Minecraft server that became popular due to its live improvised storytelling that garnered a participative fandom. This research aimed to investigate how the fan-made content from the DSMP fandom affected the canon storyline. The research utilized focused group discussion, interviews, and descriptive analysis of chosen fan-made content to give a comprehensive view of the fandom's ecosystem. Reader-response criticism, Peircean semiotics, and symbolic interactionism are used as lenses to contextualize the discussions. The research has found that DSMP fans find the participatory nature of the live streams to be engaging, and that fan-made content was essential to making sense of the DSMP's plot by archiving the storyline via "fan documentation" or naturalizing parts of it via creative fan content due to the simple nature of its medium. As an extension of this naturalization, there is a phenomenon within the DSMP wherein fan creators create unique designs for characters and story events that are defined by their own personal interpretations. There is evidence of fan-made content affecting the canonical elements within the DSMP, including changes in character designs, the addition of three new characters, and a change in the 'mechanic' of the story.

10:30am: Twitch Plays *Pokémon*
John Kirwan, Maynooth University
This paper uses the concept of narremes to understand how digital online communities engage in collaborative creativity and how they are reliant on a shared

understanding of the narrative elements of their stories. To do so, this paper provides an analysis of data from Twitch Plays *Pokémon* (TPZ) which was a digital community that played *Pokémon Red* online in 2014, and, during the sixteen days of play, developed fiction and narratives to describe their play. The TPZ community performed creativity openly on social media during a short period of time which has provided a valuable data source to study collaborative digital creativity in online communities.

Given the TPZ community was mostly active during a sixteen-day period in 2014, it provides a much more contained dataset to study the motivations for digital creative participation and the reasons for the decline of the participation following its success. After mapping the community across the internet, two particular sets of data have been selected: The Twitch discussions for being the most direct arena of participation and discussions on the Reddit community r/twitchplayspokemon for its depth of discussion.

Block G: General Studies

11:00am: *Naruto* and *A Silent Voice*: Breaking Down Bullying

Joel Thomas, Tarleton State University

This panel is about bringing the importance of mental health to the forefront of the anime community by breaking down common mental health themes and issues from various anime characters. To learn how characters have processed mental health issues, from bullying to grief, this presentation is part of a multi-panel endeavor exploring various elements of mental health and the lessons we can learn from these characters. Part 2 of this panel is at 1:30pm.

12:00pm: Return to *Fear Street*: Horror and Nostalgia for Generation Y

Dr. Eric Wesselmann, Illinois State University

In 2021, Netflix released a trilogy of films inspired by R. L. Stine's *Fear Street* series, YA horror novels that ran from 1989-1999 and then revived in 2014. The first film, *Fear Street 1994*, was set in that same year and full of nostalgic references that viewers who grew up during that time and read the original series would appreciate. The second film, set in 1978, similarly was embedded with nostalgic references for individuals who grew up during that period, or at least were familiar with popular slasher films during the late '70s and early '80s (e.g., *Friday the 13th* parts 1 & 2). The third film starts in 1666 and fits well within the horror subgenre of folk horror. Although this subgenre would be less familiar to the target audience than slasher films, the second half of the film returns to the 1994 setting, dripping with equal amounts of blood and cultural nostalgia as the first film. As such, I argue that the *Fear Street* trilogy serves as both an unapologetic

love letter to Generation Y nostalgia and an introduction to a new generation of viewers to the *Fear Street* universe.

12:30pm: Isekai That Only Work Because They Are Isekai

Lawrence Brenner, Independent Scholar

The ikesai genre in anime has exploded in the last several years with many of them having aspects taken from game mechanics including many classic RPG mechanics. In many of these cases there are ikesai that would work just as well as fantasy anime without the ikesai elements. However there has been a growth of ikesai that only work because they are ikesai, such as *Handyman Saitō in Another World*, *Cautious Hero: The Hero Is Overpowered but Overly Cautious*, *Kemono Michi: Rise Up*, and various others where the very nature of the show would not work without the ikesai elements. This includes not only works where someone from "our world" goes to another world but also to those where they could come to ours such as *The Devil is a Part-Timer!* and *Restaurant to Another World*. This panel would also cover classics such as *Magic Knight Rayearth* and *Those Who Hunt Elves* and all the various kinds of tropes, analysis of popular mechanics and those that, while using the format, also subvert the tropes.

1:00pm: *Komi-San* and *WataMote*: Social Anxiety and Society

Joel Thomas, Tarleton State University

Those who suffer from social anxiety see the world differently. Many feel unworthy of acceptance and are frightened to ask for help. This panel continues an earlier presentation that focuses on self-image and how anime characters can show paths toward personal growth.

2:00pm: How to Have Deep Anime Conversations: The 3 Cs Method

Dr. William Nation, Johns Hopkins University

This panel uses psychological case reviewing techniques to put a new spin on discussing favorite characters in both personal and professional contexts. Panelists will demonstrate their methods of thinking about how anime and manga characters act and what those actions may mean.

3:00pm: End of Conference Day 3