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Graduate School Research Symposium
Student Application

If you are working in a group, please submit one registration form. The student who will be the group contact should have his or her information on the first page; all other group members' information should be attached on additional pages in a Word document.

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Program Name: Childhood Studies

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy Current GPA: 4.0

Title of Project: The Political Monster Myth in Young Adult Literature: A Digital Ethnography

Faculty Advisor: Lynne Vallone

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Faculty Advisor Signature: *Lynne Vallone*

The first and last names of any additional team members:

Lauren Silver, Amy Jordan

Have you presented your research/creative project at a conference or event in your field?

Yes No

If yes, what conference/event? (Include, name, location, date):

Attach your abstract (250 words max, doc or docx format):



Working in a group? Attach additional information (doc or docx format):

The Political Monster Myth in Young Adult Literature: A Digital Ethnography

Kathleen Kellett

For the completion of my doctoral dissertation in the Childhood Studies department, I have embarked upon a study that interrogates youth understandings of the concept of “monstrosity” in contemporary young adult literature and U.S. politics. This study is being conducted via a six-month long practitioner ethnographic study in the form of a digital book club, wherein a dozen participants from ages 14 to 18 discuss recently published young adult science fiction, fantasy, and horror literature alongside current political events, with a focus on how the construct of the “monster” functions as a means of both creating and understanding narratives of oppression.

In twice monthly synchronous voice meetings and ongoing asynchronous chats in a private Discord server, the participants in the Monster Book Club interpret the relationship between monsters in contemporary young adult fantastical fiction and contemporary American political rhetoric, identify gaps in representation of lived adolescent experiences and those represented in YA literature, and negotiate their *own* relationship to monstrosity. Based on my readings, I believe many YA monster texts position themselves as potential sites of political resistance, but this ongoing research project interrogates whether the teen participants do so, as well, and whether they find any actionable power in the act of reclaiming the category of “monster” as a personal or collective identity.