



Updated February 2026

General FAQ

What is the Harry Potter Academic Conference (HPAC), and what is its connection to Chestnut Hill College?

The Harry Potter Academic Conference emerged from an Interdisciplinary Honors (IDHP) course for undergraduate students at Chestnut Hill College (Philadelphia, PA, USA), developed by Professor McCauley and Dr. Wendling and taught from 2009 to 2012. This IDHP course used the Harry Potter series as an example of Bildungsroman literature to study the often-competing influences of science and philosophy/religion on the development of personal truth and meaning. Independent of the course, Chestnut Hill College students formed their own Quidditch team and began to compete in the national arena and to host their own tournament, the Brotherly Love Cup.

The Harry Potter Academic Conference was first held in October 2012 as part of the town of Chestnut Hill's Harry Potter Weekend to provide an academic outlet for a serious – but always enjoyable – study of the themes in the Potter series. The conference was well attended, and presentations were made by area students, faculty, and community members. Since 2012, the conference has grown in size and scope, expanding the boundaries of a “traditional academic conference” and forming lasting relationships among members of the Potter studies community. Post-pandemic, HPAC operates an alternating schedule with fully in-person years on the Chestnut Hill College campus and odd-numbered years fully online.

What is HPAC's mission?

The Harry Potter Academic Conference (HPAC – we say it “H PACK”) exists to provide an intimate gathering where fans and scholars of all levels are welcome to engage deeply and critically with the Harry Potter series and fandom. It is an interdisciplinary space using open dialogue, community, and scholarly inquiry to study the Potterverse and its cultural impact.

When is HPAC held?

HPAC is held annually in mid-October. Conference dates are announced early and are always posted on the HPAC website.

We follow an alternating schedule between in-person conferences on the campus of Chestnut Hill College (even-numbered years) and online-only digiHPAC (odd-numbered years).

Why does HPAC alternate between in-person and online-only conferences?

The HPAC Board chose the alternating model of digiHPAC (odd-numbered years) and HPAC@CHC (even-numbered years) to reflect changes in academic landscapes and in the Potter fandom. The alternating schedule also increases the conference's accessibility for those unable to come to Chestnut Hill College, including international presenters. HPAC does not accept virtual presentations for CHC years. To carry the community spirit throughout the year, HPAC has [a Slack workspace](#) for connecting with other attendees, sharing ideas, and more.

Why do you continue to hold this conference, given the toxicity of the series author and many problematic tropes in the books?

HPAC stands with many of our fellow Potterverse organizations in condemning the inhumane, incorrect, and ignorant anti-trans and anti-queer rhetoric of the series author. The 'toxic author' is a constant conversation not unique to Potter studies (e.g., Buffy studies, scholars of HP Lovecraft). HPAC supports and respects former Potter fans who have separated themselves from the series due to the author's stance. HPAC chooses to create a space for what conference regular Dr. Brent Satterly calls "the half-blood fan," those who identify as queer or otherwise marginalized and feel harmed by the author's stance but still feel a strong connection to the Potter series. Every conference since 2020 has included discussions of these issues, on queerness in/queering the Potterverse, queering the Potter series, and how scholar-fans can negotiate what has become a difficult space. [You can read our full statement here.](#)

Who can submit to HPAC?

HPAC is a special space because many of our participants aren't students or professors. The conversation and community grow richer as those affiliated with universities and those who simply love and think deeply about the series come together to share their thoughts on the Potterverse. If you are nervous about presenting, the [HPAC Slack workspace](#) is a great place to seek a second reader or even a co-presenter. Even better: Join us for a conference and experience it for yourself!

If you cannot come to Chestnut Hill College in person for on-campus conferences (even-numbered years), you should save your submission for the next year's digiHPAC. A more detailed FAQ for international presenters is available on [the FAQ page](#).

High school students interested in presenting should email us at harrypotterconference@gmail.com to discuss participation.

What submissions does HPAC accept?

HPAC is a space for scholarship; therefore, we do not accept original fan fiction readings, presentations of fan art, etc. Fan studies papers, however, are regularly part of HPAC. It is a multi- and interdisciplinary conference, featuring papers ranging from close textual criticism to film and music studies to sports theory to chemistry and basically everywhere in between! As long as you have some sort of critical inquiry in mind, it's probably a worthy HPAC submission. The conference accepts papers on the *Potter* books, movies, and broader fandom, including the *Fantastic Beasts* series. *Cormoran Strike* studies are considered but Potter Studies work is prioritized. When in doubt, just contact us; a Board member is happy to answer your questions! HPAC considers multiple presentations from the same presenter, but each submission will be judged on its own merit.

What is needed when submitting a proposal?

Conference proposals are submitted via Google Forms. We ask for author information like your name, pronouns, title, availability, etc., so we have all the information we need from presenters all in one place. You do NOT, at any point, need to submit a full presentation draft or paper, unless you would like to share it for accessibility purposes. In your submission form, you will need to submit a 150- to 250-word abstract/summary that explains your presentation and its goals.

What can I expect from the conference?

Whether at Chestnut Hill or online, the conference takes place over a Friday and Saturday in mid-October. Programming usually goes all day both days (about 9 AM to 5 PM Eastern Time), with a midday break. Two sessions run concurrently, except for special or invited sessions and the plenary speaker.

Presentations vary widely based on the speaker. Some will read a fully drafted paper while others will speak extemporaneously off a PowerPoint. Topics range from close textual analyses to autoethnographic research on the consumer parts of the franchise to applications of the *Potter* series to current events. HPAC holds the spirit of Dumbledore's Army: we welcome presentations on social justice and equity.

In-person years include refreshments during breaks and will sometimes include craft vendors, live music, and after-conference gatherings. Craft items or books for sale at the conference are payable by cash or Venmo, depending on the vendor. Attendees frequently organize group dinners or outings outside conference hours. Lunch is available for purchase (pre-order only) at in-person HPACs. The digiHPAC years, held via Zoom Webinars, usually include a "toast"/conference wrap-up session after the conference concludes on Day 2.

Does HPAC have publication opportunities?

There is no official publication for HPAC*, but many collected volumes of essays like *Open at the Close* (ed. Conchar-Farr), *Potterversity* (ed. McDaniel and Strand – also a popular [podcast!](#)), and *The Ivory Tower, Harry Potter, and Beyond* (ed. Whited) have often come directly from presentations heard at HPAC. This is a place to form connections and make magic!

*While we have often discussed a formal publication, a journal or edited volume through a reputable press requires more work than the HPAC Board is able to offer in addition to their muggle jobs, personal lives, and the conference itself. If a Champion has interest in taking on this effort, please [contact the Board](#).

Does HPAC have an AI use policy?

Whether presenting live or pre-recorded, HPAC speakers are expected to present wholly original research. While AI may be used in the research process, AI-generated work is not acceptable. We strongly discourage participants from using AI to generate images, as conference presentations fall under [Fair Use](#) policies for existing art and imagery (though please credit original creators). We strongly discourage participants from using AI for voiceover in lieu of your own voice.

We respectfully request that attendees and speakers refrain from feeding conference content into large language model (LLM) AI programs for any reason, as speakers have not consented to this use of their original content.