

The CUNY Graduate Center's Cinema Studies Group invites you to:



A graduate student conference organized by the student-run Cinema Studies Group, with support from Film and Media Cultures and the Doctoral Graduate Student Council.

Conference Date: March 13th, 2026, 9:00 am- 5:00 pm

Location: CUNY Graduate Center, 365 5th Avenue, New York, NY (rooms TBA)

Keynote Speaker: TBA

Proposals Due: December 15th, 2025

Please submit through this Google form: [CLAWS Application Form](#)

Call for Proposals: :

We are looking for papers/performances/projects that speak to the contemporary semiotic value of Claws. Proposals may include paper presentations, performances, film screenings, and workshops. We welcome proposals from a very wide range of fields, including, but not limited to: performance studies, cinema studies, media studies, comparative literature, postcolonial studies, gender studies, fashion studies, psychology, art history, and environment and ecology. Submissions may engage in any number of topics. You will receive communication from us about the status of your proposal by January 31st, 2026.

Theme:

Claws represents both social and aesthetic categories, whether it be the artistic prowess of nail art, mani-centric fetishes, or object-oriented studies of class discrimination. Claws signifies the diverse violences of resource extraction, labor exploitation, and toxic relationships. Likewise, ideology has its claws dug into social life through media representation, economic policy, and beauty standards. Claws are manifest at all layers of life, and this year's graduate conference aims to survey their complexity and relevance through academic inquiry.

The theme of Claws, encompasses a plurality of topics that can be as artistic as they are political, and as literal as they are figurative. It involves not only the material and artistic merit of biological life, but also the very violence that threatens it. Claws are weapons and tools of both human, animal, and mechanical life.

Consider the following list of possible examples as inspiration for Claws-informed discussions:

- o Resource extraction
- o Toxic relationships
- o Oppressive systems
- o Post/transhumanism
- o Hand modeling
- o Nail art
- o Hands in cinema
- o Portrayals of femininity
- o Reality TV beauty aesthetics
- o Superhero powers and mythmaking
- o Romantasy
- o Greed and acquisition
- o Athletes

- o Social climbing, including luxury fashion
- o Climbing the corporate ladder
- o Class elements of nail fashion/class commentary
- o Animals/pets/cats
- o Ferality and wild creatures
- o “Cat” fighting and portrayals of femininity
- o Skeletal structures
- o Criminality
- o Cult studies
- o Nail biting and nail biters
- o Puppetry and marionette shows
- o The Mafia and other organized crime

FAQs:

How do I apply?

Please complete the following Google form:

[CLAWS Application Form](#)

Upload a pdf file containing a 300- to 350-word abstract that explains the work’s relevance to the theme of Claws. If you have any requirements for your presentation (ie. projector, microphone, etc), or if you intend to use props, please include complete details in a 50- to 100-word statement in the pdf. Please include your name and contact details and a 50- to 100-word biographical statement.

Who can apply?

The call for papers is open to current graduate students at an accredited university. The scope of the conference is limited to master’s and doctoral students only; undergraduates are not eligible to present. Students from outside the New York metro area are welcome to apply; however we cannot assist with the cost of travel and accommodations, or sponsor visas for international travel.

What mediums do you accept?

Submissions are not limited to academic papers. We are happy to accommodate participation in any form, including films, performances, lecture-performances, creative writing, video art and curated walks. However, note that you will present your work in a conference setting with no additional

lighting, sound, or production equipment. Projectors/speakers will be available for film screening and presentation slides.

We are also taking submissions for workshops, including: education, dance, movement and performance. Workshops will take place in a larger space, where participants can move about. The application submission is the same as above, but be sure to select the option for the workshop proposal.

Can I/we apply as a group?

Yes. You can apply as a group, however your group will be given the same time to present as individual proposals (time TBD). Please nominate one member to submit the application form on behalf of the group.

Can I/we apply as a panel?

Yes. We encourage panel submissions of three separate applicants whose work is thematically linked. We strongly prefer panels in which all the applicants are from a variety of departments, as we want to encourage inter-departmental/inter-university work.

Please nominate one panel member to submit the application form; the 3 individual proposals should be uploaded as 3 separate pdfs, each including the individual panelists' names, affiliations, and contact details. Please state the theme/title of your proposed panel on the Google form.

Will the conference be virtual or in-person?

This conference will take place entirely in-person at The CUNY Graduate Center. Panelists requesting to present on Zoom will be considered on a case-by-case basis, to address accessibility needs only.

Additional Questions? Please email: gccinemastudies@gmail.com

CUNY provides reasonable accommodations to people with disabilities. Please email your request to the above listed email for accommodations for events and services in addition to your submission materials.