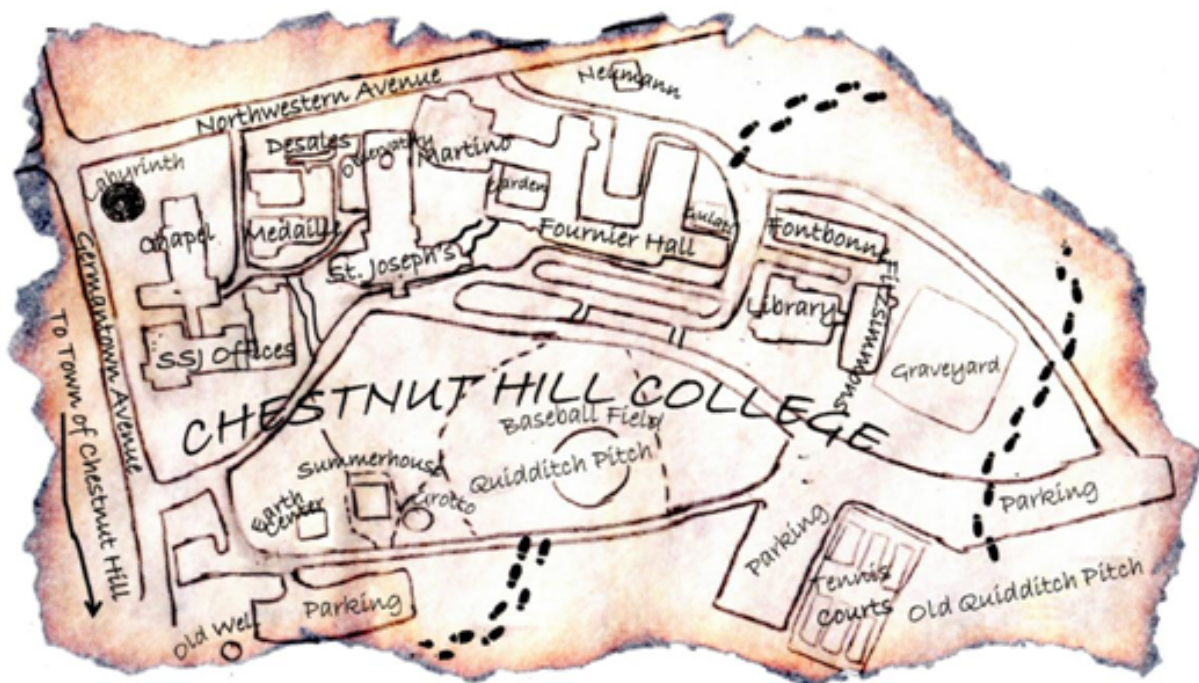


# *The Harry Potter Conference*

**Academic Reflections on the Major Themes  
in J.K. Rowling's Literature**

*Chestnut Hill College*

*October 26, 2012 at 3PM*



## **Conference Coordinators**

*Patrick McCauley, PhD, Chestnut Hill College*

*Karen Wendling, PhD, Chestnut Hill College*

## **2:30 – 3:00 PM: Conference Registration & Reception**

### **3:00 PM Peter Appelbaum, PhD (Arcadia University)**

#### **Can *Harry Potter* Help us Understand Education as a Social Institution?**

The *Harry Potter* novels and films, as recent contributions to the *Bildungsroman* genre, add one more layer to ongoing conversations about the purposes and possibilities of education in contemporary society. The perspectives offered are nothing new: radical support of autonomy and adventurous inquiry is the best mode of conservative social reproduction, teachers must sacrifice themselves as martyrs to save their students (and the world as we know it), and education is at the heart of creating the individual and society. It turns out that we can't learn anything new from Harry and his friends, but we can, indeed, from Snape.

### **3:23 PM Kait Zelenenki (Chestnut Hill College)**

#### **Wizards and Werewolves and Gays, Oh My! Lycanthropy as a Metaphor for Homosexuality**

This presentation claims that Rowling's use of lycanthropy in the *Harry Potter* series is a metaphor for homosexuality and the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. I will discuss the two main werewolves in the series, Remus Lupin and Fenrir Greyback, and their own reactions to their plight. I will also address society's reaction to their condition. Lupin reveals one extreme of lycanthropy/homosexuality, in that he tries to hide his condition from the wizarding world, and suppress his werewolf-like urges, whereas Greyback fully embraces his lycanthropy and uses this to terrorize the wizarding world. Lycanthropy in the *Harry Potter* series mirrors the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Parents were afraid to let their children near Greyback in fear that he would turn them into werewolves, just as the young Lupin had been. Lupin quit his job at Hogwarts because of this parental fear. The treatment of the werewolves in the *Harry Potter* series reveals the wizarding world to be very homophobic.

**3:36 PM Joseph Thompson, PhD (Villanova University)**

**Death Eaters and Northern Ireland**

At first glance it appears that Harry Potter lives in a globalized world that is quite similar to our own. Jennifer and Brian Folker explored those things that we take for granted as normal in our world when answering the question, "In what ways does the magical world of Harry Potter mirror the political and international world of muggles?" As the magical people of Harry's era found themselves in frequent conflict with the Death Eaters, so conflict and warfare also exists in our world. Yet one important distinction between the magical-world conflict and the real-world conflict is that nationalism and religion play no significant role in Harry's world. This is very different in our world, especially in Northern Ireland with the terrorist paramilitaries. The moral and physical hazards involved in IRA/Death Eaters violence and terrorism underscores several important elements of magical and human conflict. This presentation reflects on the violence and terrorism in Harry Potter's books as exemplified in Northern Ireland.

**4:00 PM Lorrie Kim, BA (Potterdelphia)**

**Machiavelli and the Half-Blood Prince**

By giving Snape the matronymic "Prince," J.K. Rowling hinted that Machiavelli's *The Prince* might hold some keys to her own intentions about this character. In this talk, a fresh look at Machiavelli is used to explore Rowling's passages to provide definitive answers to the following questions. Did Professor Snape redeem himself in the end of the series and did Rowling think that he had? Did Snape have a true self that was good, or was he really just out for himself? How do we know that Snape was really on Charity Burbage's side when she died? What makes something Dark Magic? And finally, was Slytherin House redeemed? Machiavelli's text is also used to suggest to the *Harry Potter* reader how it is possible to use the power of Slytherin for good.

**4:13 PM Jeff Ambrose, MA (Delaware County Community College)**

**& Richard Parent, PhD (University of Vermont)**

**The "So What" Factor: Why Re-reading Matters**

There is much to be gained in a second reading. Many read Rowling's *Harry Potter* series merely once for entertainment and pleasure. Though many dismiss the idea of reading something again, this presentation will go book by book examining hidden, below the surface words, passages or ideas. Often readers do not glean many abstract, elevated critiques of a work based on a first reading. After reading once for pleasure, we can return for a more fertile analysis. These deeper meanings and insights lurk there waiting to change the way we think about the work itself and they remind us why we read in the first place. For many, we read not just to be entertained, but to be changed.

**4:36 PM Brian Langdon (Chestnut Hill College)**

**A Glimpse into the Controversy of the *Harry Potter* Series**

Since the publishing of the *Harry Potter* series, Christians have been divided as to the nature of the series. Some individuals take the stance of approval, claiming the books are much like modern fairy tales that teach children lessons, while others disapprove of the popular series. These critics claim that the *Harry Potter* series leads children into witchcraft and occult practices. The presence of evil and how it progresses throughout the books seems to worry some parents. However author J.K. Rowling has stated that she would not romanticize evil. She wanted to present evil as it actually is. Ultimately, a concern for what children are reading and how it affects them is the driving force behind this debate. This paper will show that readers of all ages can take something away from the *Harry Potter* series. The characters serve as moral role models that teach children the values of friendship and family. Each generation has grown up with fairy tales; *Harry Potter* is now among them.

**4:50 PM    Dustin Kidd, PhD (Temple University)**

**The Medicalization of Magical Maladies:  
A Sociological Take on the World of Harry Potter**

This talk looks at the construction of the medical field within Rowling's novels, including home healthcare, the hospital wing at Hogwarts, and St. Mungo's Hospital. For instance, in the magical world, it seems that only death cannot be truly conquered, and yet wizards and witches are beset with ailments that deeply constrain their lives. This talk also examines the ways that ailment and disability impact the lives of many characters, including Harry and Voldemort. Work from the sociology of medicine and from disability studies will be used to analyze J. K. Rowling's construction of a fictional world that is both fantastical and deeply rooted in "muggle" social dynamics.

**5:15 PM    Patrick McCauley, PhD (Chestnut Hill College)**

**The Empowering Symbol of the Father in *The Prisoner of Azkaban***

It can often be difficult to determine our own most excellent or fulfilling aspiration. Paul Tillich discusses the necessity of orienting symbols within the search for our most appropriate individual purpose. Joseph Campbell focuses on the specific symbol of the Father as inspiring guide toward the discovery of authentic identity and personal mission. J. K. Rowling offers a sophisticated glimpse into the nature of this empowering symbol in *The Prisoner of Azkaban*. Rowling effectively and purposely brings the external and internal image of the Father into productive tension. This talk will attempt to reveal that belief in the literal existence of the Father figure may perform an indispensable role within the overall dynamic of symbolic orientation and inspiration.

**5:28 PM    Karen Wendling, PhD (Chestnut Hill College)**

**Alchemy, Chemistry, and the Secrets of *Harry Potter***

In preparing to write the *Harry Potter* series, J.K. Rowling did extensive research into alchemy, a philosophical tradition often cited as the precursor of modern chemistry. While modern scientists and intellectuals often discard ancient alchemy as a pseudoscience (transforming lead into gold), it is important to define alchemy for what it was: not a proto-science, but a religious quest for spiritual enlightenment and purification. Rowling's seven *Harry Potter* novels not only include numerous references to real-life alchemists, their pursuits and beliefs, but each *Harry Potter* novel can also be interpreted as a purification process; Harry himself is turned from spiritual "lead" into "gold" over the course of the series. This talk will introduce the basic concepts of alchemy as interpretative keys to not only explore Rowling's literature but also to gain a better appreciation of Harry's long-term growth and development due in part to the influence of his friends Ron and Hermione.

## *Conference Notes*

# *Harry Potter Weekend Events*

*All Weekend: Enjoy Shopping and Dining in the town of Chestnut Hill  
...Transformed into the World of Harry Potter, plus  
Diagon Alley Straw Maze at the Woodmere Art Museum*

## **Friday, October 26<sup>th</sup>**

**2:30 – 5:45 PM:** The Harry Potter Conference (Chestnut Hill College Rotunda area)

**6 PM:** Quidditch Players Parade followed by Chestnut Hill Pub Crawl (starts at the Top of the Hill Fountain Plaza)

**7 PM:** *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* film showing (Chestnut Hill Hotel) or Ghost Tour<sup>1</sup> (Chestnut Hill Hotel) or join Stagecrafters for scary stories, a magic show, and costume contest (Theater)

## **Saturday, October 27<sup>th</sup>**

**Transportation:** Knight Bus Trolley in Chestnut Hill and Hogwarts Express Bus from Chestnut Hill West Station to the College

**9:30 AM – 6 PM:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Brotherly Love Quidditch Tournament plus Harry Potter Vendors (Chestnut Hill College Quidditch Pitch)

**6:30 – 8:30 PM:** Chestnut Hill Ghost Walk<sup>1</sup> (departs from the Public Library on the ½ hour)

## **Sunday, October 28<sup>th</sup>**

**11 AM:** Quidditch 101 Class (Chestnut Hill College, Sugarloaf Estate Lawn) with Trick or Treating & Costume Parade (Chestnut Hill town) to follow

<sup>1</sup> Nominal fee required