

### Unit 3 Writing in the Humanities: Conference Paper

#### RHETORICAL SITUATION CHART

Genre	Purpose	Audience	Role	Rhetorical Situation
Conference Paper	Form an original argument about a short-story by a Latinx author based on primary and secondary sources.	Literary scholars (undergraduate, graduate, and professors), specifically those who study Latinx literature, horror, and the short story.	Literary scholar	You are presenting a paper at a conference exploring the short stories of six Latinx writers of horror or supernatural fiction. You will present your paper on a panel with 2 other literary scholars. Each scholar on the panel will present a paper exploring a single work by the author.

You are a scholar who is interested in attending a conference exploring short stories by Latinx authors that contain elements of horror or the supernatural. The conference organizers have announced the following CFP (call for papers): *\*Note: this is a fictional conference. The Carolina Society for the Study of the Short Story doesn't exist.*

The Carolina Society for the Study of the Short Story requests proposals for papers for an international conference entitled, "A Closer Look at Latinx Horror Stories," to be held in Chapel Hill, April 23-30, 2024. Horror fiction, a genre once dominated by white writers, has recently experienced a surge in the participation of Latinx authors. The increasing presence of Latinx writers in the horror genre has served to not only add new energy to the genre but also to challenge the perception of Latinx as a monolithic identity. Central to this expansion of Latinx horror is the short story, a form characterized by brevity and ideal for capturing readers' attention. In the hands of skillful artists, the short story can provide a vivid snapshot of life, culture, and society. We invite papers that closely and critically examine short stories by Latinx authors, shedding light on key topics and themes in their work and also, potentially, on their unique contributions to the horror genre. Each panel at the conference will be dedicated to a different Latinx author, providing a focused lens through which to explore the themes central to that author's short stories.

You are applying to present at the conference, meaning you will need to write a **paper proposal** and, if accepted, a **4-5 page paper to be presented at the conference**. This paper needs to make an argument about a theme or topic in the story. You may also want to create a Powerpoint to accompany the presentation of your paper. Your job is to join in on conversation about your chosen author's work, both by sharing your research and by engaging with the research of other scholars exploring similar topics. In doing so, you will further the scholarly community's knowledge of your chosen author's work and Latinx writers more broadly.

Conferences generally have an overarching theme and individual panels exploring specific aspects of that theme. The title of the conference you are applying to is "A Closer Look at Latinx Horror Stories." We will decide together on the topic of the six panels, working together to select six Latinx short-story writers we would like to focus on. You will then choose which panel you'd like to present on and apply to that panel by writing a proposal, explaining which story you will focus on and what you will argue about that story. Two panels will present on April 23rd, two will present on April 25th, and two will present on April 30th. At the end of each panel, there will be a Q&A where all the scholars in the room will be able to ask questions and give suggestions about the research that was shared.

This unit will help us conceptualize "the academic essay" as real-world literary criticism that engages with particular discourse communities. You will also work on deriving arguments from observation and evidence by first finding specific detail and then interpreting these details.

**Authors to consider include, but are not limited to:**

- Martyza K. Rubio
- Sofia Romero
- Brenda Peynado
- Carmen Maria Machado
- Chantel Acevedo
- Julia Alvarez
- Ann Dávila Cardinal
- Racquel Marie
- Ari Tison
- Silvia Moreno-Garcia
- Juan Martinez

Each presenter will focus on a short-story by the selected author and will write a paper that builds an argument on a theme or topic in that story. For example, one might write about Carmen Maria Machado's use of violence to explore beauty standards in her short story "Eight Bites."

**TRANSFERABLE SKILLS**

- Identifying primary and secondary sources
- Organizing around a progressive order
- Observations and arguments based on close-reading

- Entering a scholarly debate
- Brainstorming
- Integrating direct quotations
- Argumentative thesis statements
- Cohesive paragraph structure
- MLA citations
- Contextualizing arguments
- Textual Analysis
- Topic sentences and transitions
- Research in the humanities
- Collaborate with other scholars

### **Preparatory Homework Assignments:**

- Panel topic selection (completed in class April 2)
- Close-reading worksheet (due April 4)
- Mini bibliography (completed in class April 4)

These assignments are to get you thinking about and closely observing your story, as well as starting to develop some ideas. For additional help with what to look for in your close reading and annotating, read [101+ Questions to Ask a Short Story](#) and [Textual Analysis](#).

### **FEEDER 3.1: Paper Proposal**

For this feeder, you will write a 150- to 250-word abstract/proposal that will provide the conference organizers with a summary of the research you hope to share at the conference. An effective abstract will provide a preview of your thesis and your key points, giving the conference organizers enough information to determine whether your paper is on-topic, relevant, and interesting. At the very least, the research question you plan to answer by analyzing your selected short story should be clear.

According to [UNC's Writing Center](#), you may choose to include the following kinds of information:

- Reason for writing: What is the importance of the research? Why would a reader be interested in the larger work?
- Problem/Question: What question or problem does this work attempt to address? What is the scope of the project? What is the main argument/thesis/claim?
- Methodology: Abstracts may describe the types of evidence used in the research.
- Results: Abstracts may preview the findings of a paper.
- Implications: How does this work add to the body of knowledge on the topic?

### **FEEDER 3.2: Conference Paper Draft**

You will complete a 4-5 page draft of your paper in order to receive feedback from your instructor and your classmates prior to your presentation. An effective paper should:

- Make an original argument about a short story based on close reading and careful observation.
- Engage with at least one other critic.
- Have a thesis statement that is clearly stated and effectively defended with appropriate use of primary and secondary sources and textual analysis.
- Consist of at least three main points.
- Transition smoothly between the ideas and examples discussed.
- Use proper MLA citation and list all sources used in a works cited page.

In “real life,” the only person who ever sees your conference paper is you. Your audience will hear the paper presented but will generally not have access to the physical paper itself. That means it can be a relatively messy document with a large font and “notes to self” written throughout, such as section headings and prompts to change Powerpoint slides. Once the paper is presented, scholars often take the feedback they have received, revise their conference paper, and expand it in order to turn it into an academic article to be considered for publication in a journal. For this reason, the formatting of your paper will not be considered in the grading. Instead, the effectiveness of the argument and the quality of the evidence used will be the primary influences on your grade. Factors like clarity, style, flow, and word choice will also help determine whether you have written highly effective paper (A+) or one that is less effective. Note that proper use of MLA citations remains a requirement.

Your final conference paper presentation will be graded on both content and delivery, but you will not receive additional feedback unless it is requested. In other words, Feeder 3.2 is your last chance to receive feedback from your instructor. For that reason, you must have a complete 4-5 page draft by the due date (April 16). Incomplete drafts will receive lower grades.

### **FINAL PROJECT: Conference Paper Presentation at "A Closer Look at Latinx Horror Stories" Conference**

**Length:** 6-7 minutes (max!)

The final unit project is the presentation of your paper at the fictional conference, “A Closer Look at Latinx Horror Stories.” (See top of document for full conference description.)

It is common practice at literary conferences to read papers word-for-word. However, the strategies we discussed in Unit 2 for engaging listeners are still applicable. You will want to keep in mind that your audience is *hearing* your argument, not *reading* it. Listeners should be able to follow along with the points you are making without getting lost or zoning out. You are encouraged to look up from your paper and make eye-contact, to read at a comfortable pace, and

to write with a slightly simpler and more informal style than you would use if you were writing a version of the paper with the goal of having it published. Your success in engaging listeners will be considered in the grading of your final project.

Each presenter on the panel will have 6-7 minutes to present their research. At the end of each panel, there will be time for attendees to ask questions about the research presented. You may have to shorten your draft to fit it into 6-7 minutes. If you find that your paper takes you significantly longer than 7 minutes to read, you may consider cutting a section altogether rather than shortening each section. You might note in your presentation that a topic was cut in hopes that your listeners will bring up that topic in the Q&A by saying something like, “In the full version of my paper, I discuss this topic in more detail, and I am happy to talk more about it in the Q&A.”

<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Draft Date</b>	<b>Due Date</b>
Feeder 3.1		April 9
Feeder 3.2		April 16
Unit 3 Final Project		April 23, 25, or 30