

CFP: “American Carnage”

Canadian Association for American Studies, October 23-25, 2026 (In person at Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia)

In his 2017 inauguration speech, Donald Trump “coined the sinister phrase ‘American carnage’ to vividly conjure an image of inner cities he said were affected by crime, a political elite that had forgotten ordinary people, and a landscape of rusted factories like tombstones” (Pilkington, “American carnage,” *The Guardian*, 21 Jan 2017). This characterization of American life has aided Trump’s efforts to forge an imperialist and increasingly authoritarian regime in the US that includes deploying the National Guard to Democratically controlled urban centers while ignoring the rule of law to do so. Of course, such attempts to use both material violence and rhetorical violence to similar ends has a history that both predates and arguably sets the conditions for the establishment of the US and other settler nations in the so-called “New World” and beyond. Historically, carnage comes from the Latin word “carnaticum,” meaning “flesh,” and refers to the “violent killing of a large number of people.”

Such violence is never without concomitant forms of resistance, however. More recently, the 2022 movie “American Carnage,” ironically invoked Trump’s phrase as the comic horror film advocated for the rights of undocumented Hispanic youths in the US, while any number of cultural forms—from dystopian fiction and film, to gothic and horror, to visual arts, and other forms—have used representations of carnage to challenge what Toni Morrison called the “national narrative” of the US. There are ecological resonances, as well, from both the factory farming of animals and the environmental effects thereof.

This conference takes its title from the multiple resonances of the term, “American carnage” and what it means literally and figuratively. **Please note:** CAAS is open to any and all papers on American Studies, not limited to the specific topic of each year’s conference, but we particularly invite papers that address this broad topic in the United States from different disciplinary approaches and over all time periods. Some themes might include (but are not limited) to the following:

- American carnage as fantasy
- American carnage and the American Dream
- Carnivores, factory farms, and the ecological
- Climate change and geopolitics
- Colonial and imperial violence
- Consumption and /as carnage
- Flesh, fantasy, and identities
- Genres of carnage: utopias, dystopias, horror, and more
- Labour organization and anti-labour actions
- Trade Wars, Tariffs, and economic violence
- Violence and state formation
- Violence as / against resistance

Please email 250-word proposals and brief bios by April 15, 2025 to caasconference26@gmail.com and please include the subject line: **CAAS 2026 CFP Submission**.