

Call for Papers — Student Conference

Situated (Dis)Affiliation? **The Politics of Belonging and Alienation in Space and Place**

What does it mean to feel that we belong? *Where* do we belong? Or, perhaps even more importantly, how does a feeling that we do *not* belong somewhere come to be?

Echoing Henri Lefebvre, who argues that space is “at once result and cause, product and producer”, we posit that our reciprocal relationships with space – encompassing material, affective, and symbolic negotiations of power – stand at the centre of these questions. These manifold meaning-making processes may therefore be understood as forms of what we propose to term ‘(dis)affiliation’ – that is, as the shifting negotiations between belonging and alienation, inclusion and exclusion, attachment or identification, that unfold through our spatial encounters. Drawing on Donna Haraway’s notion of *situatedness*, we view such (dis)affiliations as always embodied and context-dependent, shaped by the specific positions from which we engage with space. In this sense, space becomes both site and medium in and through which these dynamics are continuously made and umade.

The ways in which these processes and relationships unfold can be observed in different cultural phenomena: from functions of place-making that transform space and imbue it with new systems of meaning to neoliberal marketing strategies that commodify natural, urban, or even digital landscapes – they all tend to our affective, lived experience of space. Feelings of (dis)affiliation with (non)belonging or alienation that might thereby be evoked are also continuously negotiated within cultural products such as literature and film, evident in works ranging from Gothic depictions of displacement and otherness such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) to Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) with its contestation of urban space, and more contemporary engagements with spatial conflict, identity, and (im)mobility as seen in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000) or Kenneth Branagh’s *Belfast* (2021).

We aim to interrogate how notions of (dis)affiliation, belonging, or alienation are informed by the varying structures of power which govern our encounters with space and place. Which factors determine, evoke, and continuously reconstruct (dis)affiliation with space? How are mechanisms that elicit feelings of belonging or alienation in space formed, upheld, and controlled? In what ways do the lines between these feelings take shape, and to what extent might they be contingent and permeable rather than clearly defined? Where and how are these relationships, affects, and power structures represented in film, literature, and other forms of cultural production? How can notions of belonging or alienation be considered key drivers in our experience of space?

We invite contributions that address these and related questions through theoretical reflections, case studies, or close readings of (pop)cultural, literary, or media materials. They may include, but are by no means limited to, the following themes:



- (Post)Colonial Space, Orientalism, and Constructions of Otherness
- Space, Gender, and Queer Identities
- Critical Border Studies
- Critical Tourism Studies
- Travel Writing and (Im)Mobility
- Ecocriticism and Geocriticism
- Notions of Home, Nostalgia, and Escapism
- Historical Space and Cultural Memory
- Urbanity and/or Rurality, Spaces of Difference
- Space, Subjectivity, and Affect
- Migration, Displacement, and Exile
- Mechanisms of Surveillance and Control
- Fictitious and Fantastic Spaces

We encourage anyone interested – at bachelor's, master's, or early PhD level of study – from disciplines across the humanities to submit an **abstract of approximately 300 words** for a 20-minute paper, to be presented in either English or German language. Submissions are to be sent to the organisers under ang-studierendenkonferenz@ovgu.de along with a **short bio-note** (ca. 150 words), containing information about your studies, **by 15 February 2026**. Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact us.

The conference will take place in person from **17 to 18 April 2026** at the Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg. We look forward to welcoming you there!

The organisers:

Ella Keim, Jasper Bettin, Junia Mosel

Works Cited

- Haraway, Donna. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 14, no. 3, Autumn 1988, pp. 575–99.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Blackwell, 1991.
- Soja, Edward W. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Blackwell, 1996.