

# *From Fargo to Hawkins*

## *Exploring 21st Century Midwestern Culture*



### Call for Proposals - "Rediscovering the American Midwest" Series

Midwestern culture in the 2000–2025 era entered a distinct phase. The ubiquity of the internet, the coming of iPhones and social media, the demise of movie rental stores, the collapse of once-powerful urban newspapers, the thinning out of the cinema infrastructure, the fragmentation of media spaces, and the persistence and decline of institutions of regional culture all transformed the Midwest's media and cultural landscape. Hastings College Press seeks proposals exploring all these developments and various aspects of Midwestern culture throughout the first quarter of the twenty-first century. Please send vita and 300-word proposals to [Jon.Lauck@usd.edu](mailto:Jon.Lauck@usd.edu), who will edit the collection to be published by Hastings College Press in 2026. **Proposal deadline: January 1, 2025.**

Topics could include, but are not limited to

- Omaha-based movies of Alexander Payne
- Second Golden Age of television or prestige TV (did it pass the Midwest by?)
- Friction between a postmodern vs. a traditional Midwest and the collapse of metanarratives
- Creation (and termination) of new literary journals and publishing houses
- Rise of new literary voices such as J. Ryan Stradal
- Rise of new Muslim voices (e.g., Ghassan Zeineddine's *Dearborn: Stories* (2023))
- Complexities of Rust Belt identity
- Native American media (e.g., *Reservation Dogs*) and writers (e.g., David Trauer)
- Barack Obama's Kansas and Chicago
- Television series *Fargo*
- Indiana of *Stranger Things*
- How the Midwest was excluded from the Marvel Universe
- Cleveland jokes

- Rise and exhaustion of trauma plots
- Essayists like Meghan O'Gieblyn, Roxanne Gay, and Debra Marquart
- Emergence of LGBTQ+ rights themes (e.g., *Boys Don't Cry*)
- Media treatments of Covid battles in the Midwest
- Hannah Horvath (Lena Dunham) in Oberlin and Iowa City
- Caitlyn Clark media phenomena
- Effective end of *Prairie Home Companion*
- Free speech debate (the University of Chicago statement) as intertwined with debates over CRT and wokeness
- "Pretendian" controversy and Native American identity in media reports
- Weakening of traditional Midwestern masculinity
- Media coverage of BLM and anti-police protests (Minneapolis, Ferguson, Cleveland, Kenosha)
- "Middle-ness" (or Midwest-ness) of Middle Earth and the Shire in the LOTR trilogy.