

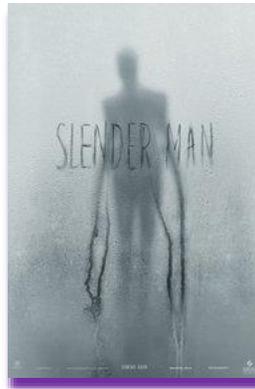
# Slender Man and the Experience of the Supernatural

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**With a response by Merrill Kaplan, OSU**

Thursday, February 28, 4:30-6:00

Multipurpose Room (165) in the Thompson Library; free and open to the public



The Slender Man legend may be a type of phenomenon where we have to create both the experience and the narrative, as Jeffrey A. Tolbert (2013) has argued, but at times, Slender Man is a name given to the shared experience that bridges both the experience-centered approach to narratives that David Hufford explored (1989) and the cultural-source hypothesis. Clearly there are incidents where the story comes first and the experience comes after, but we also see moments where a previous experience is attributed to Slender Man. I would argue that either way, the experience still *feels* real: Slender Man is an unacknowledged common experience that has turned into a “typical experience” on the Internet. This now typical experience is without “an experience,” so there is no single definitive experience, but rather a series of typical experiences. The idea of Slender Man fills in that gap of having “an experience,” providing an object to describe this subjective, typical but heretofore an unacknowledged common experience. Slender Man is not a simple entity that can be looked at as belonging to a single folk group. He is, possibly, an acknowledgement of the unacknowledged common experience of being watched. The reason why he “feels real” to so many people is that he helps to give a voice to a real experience that is difficult to understand otherwise.

**Andrea Kitta is the author of *Vaccinations and Public Concern in History: Legend, Rumor, and Risk Perception* (2011).**

