Zombies are everywhere in pop culture! But, hey, that’s normal, says college professor

From AMC’s ‘The Walking Dead’ series to the big screen, and even on book stands, people have become obsessed with zombies. And it’s to be expected, when you look at historical trends and today’s cultural and economic upheaval, says Clemson University professor Sarah Lauro.

Zombies are infecting popular culture, from television to movies and video games, and it has to do with how people feel today, according to Clemson University professor Sarah Lauro.

Zombies seem to be everywhere these days.

In the popular TV series “The Walking Dead,” humans struggle to escape from a pack of zombies hungry for flesh. Prank alerts have warned of a zombie apocalypse on radio stations in a handful of states. And across the country, zombie wannabes in tattered clothes occasionally fill local parks,
gurgling moans of the undead.

RELATED: PRANKSTERS SCARE MONTANA RESIDENTS THAT ZOMBIES ARE COMING

Are these just unhealthy obsessions with death and decay? To Clemson University professor Sarah Lauro, the phenomenon isn’t harmful or a random fad, but part of a historical trend that mirrors a level of cultural dissatisfaction and economic upheaval.

Lauro, who teaches English at Clemson, studied zombies while working on her doctoral degree at the University of California at Davis. Lauro said she keeps track of zombie movies, TV shows and video games, but her research focuses primarily on the concept of the “zombie walk,” a mass gathering of people who, dressed in the clothes and makeup of the undead, stagger about and dance.

PHOTOS: 15 WACKIEST 'WALKING DEAD' ZOMBIE MAKEOVERS

It’s a fascination that, for Lauro, a self-described “chicken,” seems unnatural. Disinterested in violent movies or games, Lauro said she finds herself now taking part in both in an attempt to further understand what makes zombie-lovers tick.

“I hate violence,” she said. “I can’t stand gore. So it’s a labor, but I do it.”

Anthony Lopez, 38, of Jamaica, Queens and Amy Lorenzana, 21, of Kew Gardens attend a Zombie Prom in Manhattan.

Jennifer Love Hewitt: My breasts are worth $5M
Jennifer Love Hewitt realizes what her best assets are and wants to make sure they’re covered

Celebs whose careers are going off the deep end
Yes, there really is ANOTHER celebrity reality show in the works — and it’s already making waves in

105 fall ill on Royal Caribbean cruise ship
It just keeps getting worse for the cruise industry. More than 100 people aboard an 11-day Royal Caribbean

2-year-old Colorado boy raped, drowned in pool at vacation home in Mexico: officials
A 2-year-old boy from western Colorado was killed

Spring Break: Brews, blonds & a MONKEY!
After many long cold weeks of winter, these spring breakers are ready to let loose! For years Cancun, 

Parents turn their children in after seeing them on tape committing robbery
Parents turned their teenage sons in to cops after seeing surveillance

What better way to celebrate Justin Timberlake's fifth time hosting "Saturday Night Live" than with a star-studded after party? Check out which old cast favorites

Zombies are everywhere in pop culture! But, hey, that's normal, says college professor – NY Daily News

What better way to celebrate Justin Timberlake's fifth time hosting... "What better way to celebrate Justin Timberlake's fifth time hosting "Saturday Night Live" than with a star-studded after party? Check out which old cast favorites and which of Timberlake's nearest and dearest came out to New York's Buddakan restaurant to party with the multi-talented star ...

She's a proud wife! Justin Timberlake's better half, Jessica Biel, was all smiles as she arrived at the "SNL" after party for her hubby in the early morning hours of March 10, 2013.

Former Florida high school clerk busted for s... "Former Florida high school clerk busted for s... A 43-year-old high school clerk in Florida looking for some attention sent dozens of naked photos of herself...

TV host found with other man's wife shot, kil... "TV host found with other man's wife shot, kil... The Sportsman Channel says it's deeply saddened by the shooting death in northwestern Montana of...

Arizona parents waging legal war against Walmart after temporarily losing custody of "Arizona parents waging legal war against Walmart after temporarily losing custody of An Arizona couple is waging a legal war against...

'It's lies, all lies!': Wife suspected in murder-for-hire plot said she's got nothing to hide at 'It's lies, all lies!': Wife suspected in murder-for-hire plot said she's got nothing to hide at EXCLUSIVE: Grief-stricken relatives of a Brooklyn man...

Ex of Marvin Gaye isn't too happy with new play and movie "Ex of Marvin Gaye isn't too happy with new play and movie With a play about her dead ex-husband coming to New York and a film in the works, Marvin Gaye's ex...

Adoptee's search for her birth mother ends in... "Adoptee's search for her birth mother ends in... Kathleen Hoy Foley was 16, alone and pregnant from a rape in 1964 when she decided to put the baby up...

EXCLUSIVE: Gambino capo may finally get prison over 1981 killing "EXCLUSIVE: Gambino capo may finally get prison over 1981 killing For many families of murder victims, there is never justice — but for Catherine...

Elle Macpherson gets engaged to billionaire boyfriend "Elle Macpherson gets engaged to billionaire boyfriend Australian supermodel Elle Macpherson is off the market once again. Macpherson, 46, said yes...

While the plot points in these movies may not be the most memorable, the nude scenes have proven to be completely unforgettable. Check out the stars who are...
The mid- to late 2000s also saw an uptick in overall zombie popularity, perhaps prompted in part by the release of post-apocalyptic movies including “Dawn of the Dead” and “28 Days Later.”

As of last year, Lauro said, zombie walks had been documented in 20 countries. The largest gathering drew more than 4,000 participants at the New Jersey Zombie Walk in Asbury Park, N.J., in October 2010, according to the Guinness World Records.

RELATED: LONG ISLAND MAN SHOOTS GIRLFRIEND OVER ZOMBIE TV SHOW

“We are more interested in the zombie at times when as a culture we feel disempowered,” Lauro said. “And the facts are there that, when we are experiencing economic crises, the vast population is feeling disempowered. ... Either playing dead themselves ... or watching a show like ‘Walking Dead’ provides a great variety of outlets for people.”

But, Lauro pointed out, the display of dissatisfaction isn’t always a conscious expression of that feeling of frustration.

“If you were to ask the participants, I don’t think that all of them are very cognizant of what they’re saying when they put on the zombie makeup and participate,” she said. “To me, it’s such an obvious allegory. We feel like, in one way, we’re dead.”

PHOTOS: Forget 'Game of Thrones' — remember these nude scenes?

Yale students admit to bestiality during sex workshop

FBI: rap group's fans are a 'violent street g...'

How fast were they going? 'High rate' of speed becomes focus in deadly joy ride that killed 6

Bus driver accused in India gang rape hangs himself: authorities

Italian overtakes Ghanian in odds for Pope

High school dance teacher held in student-sex...

A matter of inches: Man in Corvette nearly decapitated after car slams into the back of semi-truck

Texas man gets $258K tax refund from Uncle Sam — but he's got to give it back

Cocaine confiscated at JFK Airport - Weirdest stuff stopped at customs

2013 Chrysler 300 drops Bentley look-alike act, delivers style and luxury

The next Kate Upton? Sexy Sports Illustrated model Nina Agdal stars in Carl's Jr. mouth-watering...