

CALL FOR PAPERS
American Religion and Literature Society
American Literature Association
31st Annual Conference
May 21-24, 2020
Manchester Grand Hyatt
One Market Place
San Diego, CA

The American Religion and Literature Society will sponsor two panels and one roundtable discussion at the 2020 national meeting. Please submit proposals to the contact person indicated at the conclusion of the relevant CFP. Be sure to include your name, institutional affiliation, email address, and any AV requests. Electronic submissions only, in .doc or .docx format. The deadline for submission to the ARLS is **January 10, 2020**.

Keywords in the Study of Religion and American Literature (Roundtable Discussion)

Nearly twenty-five years since Jenny Franchot described religion as American literary study's "invisible domain," methods and keywords for the study of religion and American literature have proliferated. Panels, special issues, and edited collections abound featuring conversations about the "postsecular," "secularization theory," "secular studies," and "religion and literature studies," among many other categories. These terms are often, though not always, used interchangeably, signaling shared thematic and topical interests among Americanists who study religion rather than identifying distinct methodological commitments and critical orientations.

For this roundtable discussion, the American Religion and Literature Society invites scholars working in all areas of these subfields to propose or revise a keyword that helps to clarify a significant movement within the study of religion and American literature today. Topics might include, but are by no means limited to: postsecularism, secularization, secular criticism, religious or devotional reading, the religious right / left, race and religion, gender and religion, religion and immigration / diaspora, ritual, lived religion, literature and theology, and transcendence.

The American Religion and Literature Society aims to assemble a diverse roundtable of 5-6 speakers from all academic career stages and from a wide range of institutions. Priority will be given to proposals that interrogate the keyword's utility, that explore overlooked limitations or opportunities afforded by the keyword, or that offer a keyword to propose new paths for linking or distinguishing among the many different branches of religion and American literature studies active today.

Please submit an abstract of no more than 300 words to Ryan Siemers (ryansiemers@suu.edu).

Religion and Utopia in American Literature

Recent scholarship excavates the politics of religions in American literature but has largely left untreated the utopian quality of religion. In many literary texts, religion provides bases for imagining new social relations. Reading religion as utopian invites us to look anew at the multivalent relations between religion and politics in American literature.

The American Religion and Literature Society seeks proposals for presentations on literary expressions of religious utopia or utopian religion broadly construed. We welcome presentations on any period, genre, or

form of American literature, and those regarding any religious orientation. We are open to a variety of approaches and topics, including but not limited to:

Utopia, Dystopia, Anti-Utopia
Secularism and post-secularism
Sex and Gender
Queer Theory
Disability
Race
Political Economy
Ecocriticism, Environmental Writing, Climate Change
Science Writing
Geographies and Temporalities
Religious Fundamentalism
Reparative and Counter-hegemonic Religion

We also encourage interpretations of works of literature that do not overtly thematize religion.

Please email an abstract of no more than 300 words, questions, and /or concerns to Dave Morris (dcmorris@illinois.edu).

Two Gileads in Contemporary Fiction: Margaret Atwood and Marilynne Robinson

In light of the 2019 publication of *The Testaments* (Margaret Atwood's long-awaited sequel to *The Handmaid's Tale*), the widespread popularity of the television adaptation of Atwood's fiction, and a forthcoming special issue of *Christianity & Literature* on the subject of literature and the Christian Right, the American Religion and Literature Society and the Marilynne Robinson Society will co-host a special session on the two Gileads of contemporary fiction: Margaret Atwood's theocratic dystopia and Marilynne Robinson's homage to religious life in the American Midwest.

Beyond sharing a name, Atwood and Robinson's respective Gileads feature many fruitful similarities that warrant further consideration by scholars of religion and North American literature. Each features women in unconventional relationships with older men bearing considerable religious authority; each contains extensive meditations on the impact of religion on American ideas about family and childhood; each devotes considerable attention to the way reading and writing, particularly as these practices are facilitated or restricted by religious contexts, shape the subject's perception of her everyday experience; and each invites its readers to consider the role that religious discourse, biblical hermeneutics, and the dynamics of faith play in contemporary public and political life.

Please submit an abstract of no more than 500 words to Ray Horton (rhorton3@murraystate.edu).