

The Philip Roth Society invites submissions for a panel entitled “Philip Roth and the Return of History” at the American Literature Association Conference, currently scheduled to be held July 7-11, 2021, in Boston, MA.

The concept of “the end of history” has been addressed by a range of scholars, across disciplines and centuries, theorized perhaps most recognizably (and controversially) in recent decades by Francis Fukuyama. In *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992), Fukuyama argues that humanity has reached the limits of possibility for significant political change. If 2020 has proven anything, however, it is that alternative ideologies and new structures are essential to resolve the embedded problems of democracy, an insight Roth’s fiction knows well. Roth engaged widely with our fraught notions of history, but explicitly so in *The Plot Against America*, where his narrator expounds on the problem of rendering the “relentless unforeseen” into a “harmless” and palatable national narrative. “The terror of the unforeseen is what the science of history hides, turning disaster into epic,” he writes. With this in mind, the Philip Roth Society seeks submissions that address the ways the work of Philip Roth can help us think through our modern concepts of history and time in terms of governance, the environment, systemic racism, technological development, public health, and more. With these possibilities in mind, we seek papers considering how Roth counters the notion of an “end of history.” Where does he confront humanity’s darker, unresolved historical conflicts in tension with his more progressive vision? Where do his works demonstrate eerie prescience about the resurfacing or repeating of such histories? Additional topics might include (but are not limited to): the role of history and/or the process of historicizing in Roth's fiction; representations of linear or nonlinear time; the return of the repressed; criticisms of neoliberalism; fault-lines in the American democratic system; revisionist history; and the implications of “the relentless unforeseen.”

Proposals (approx. 200 words) along with a brief bio should be emailed to Maggie McKinley, the Philip Roth Society Program Chair, at mmckinle@harpercollege.edu by February 15, 2021.