

Call for Papers for WLA’s “Way Out West” panel at the 2023 American Literature Association Meeting (Boston, May 25-28)

Artists and writers have long been deconstructing dominant notions of the American West. In 1957, jazz saxophonist Sonny Rollins released *Way Out West*, a record that drew inspiration from California landscapes, TV Westerns, and overlooked Black cowboys. The album cover depicts Rollins outfitted as a gunfighter in desert surrounds, complete with cacti and a sun-bleached cattle skull. Where you might expect to find a big iron on his hip, he cradles his tenor sax. Today, artists like Orville Peck continue to revise, rewrite, and expand the boundaries of what we might consider the story of the West both in sound, style, and location—the South African-born crooner, now based out of Canada, has gained major success on the U.S. Country charts with ballads about openly queer relationships, all while wearing fringe-trimmed, Lone Ranger-style masks that obscure his identity.

This panel, titled “Way Out West: Literature of People, Places, and Politics beyond Boundaries,” welcomes presentations that consider works and/or storytellers who, like Rollins and Peck, might typically be deemed outside traditional boundaries of the West(ern), those that trouble, tease, or radically redefine what we think we mean when we talk about Western literature.

Proposals for presentations working outside of single disciplines are especially encouraged, as are those that embrace an expansive definition of “texts.” All proposals will be considered, but specific interest will be shown to those that address one or more of the following:

- works, authors, or forms considered outside typical conceptualizations of Western literature (i.e. oral storytelling, music, film, visual art)
- coming out as LGBTQIA+ or Two-Spirit in the West
- works that could be classified as “weird” or “acid” westerns, either through blending elements of sci-fi, fantasy, or horror or through gonzo-style depictions of the West
- remote and/or supposedly desolate spaces such as reservations, borderlands, or deserts
- places traditionally overlooked in the literature of the West, whether in the U.S. or beyond (e.g. Urban metros, Alaska, Canada, Mexico, Australia)
- far-right, far-left, or otherwise fundamentalist movements in the West

For consideration for this panel, please submit an abstract (250-400 words) to Travis Franks (travis.franks@usu.edu) by **JANUARY 1, 2023**. Current membership with WLA is not required in order to submit a proposal, though all presenters must be current members by the time of the conference.

The Western Literature Association is an affiliated organization of the ALA, and I will be proposing that the panel be submitted as the WLA’s guaranteed panel for the meeting.

The American Literature Association’s 34th Annual Conference will meet at the Westin Copley Place in Boston from May 25th through May 28th, 2023 (Thursday through Sunday of Memorial Day weekend).

For further information about the American Literature Association conference, please consult the ALA website at <https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>