

CFP: “Emerson and William James”

This panel is co-sponsored by the Ralph Waldo Emerson Society and the William James Society.

It is well known that William James considered himself to be Ralph Waldo Emerson’s spiritual heir. Their lives were intertwined: Emerson was James’s godfather, and Emerson was so close with the James family that one room in their New York house was designated as “Mr. Emerson’s room” due to frequent visits. James also took an intellectual interest in Emerson. Even early on, as Robert Richardson describes, Emerson “was certainly vividly present in [James’s] imagination.” While James disagreed with many of Emerson’s more transcendental claims, in 1903 William wrote to his brother Henry to exclaim, “Emerson is exquisite!”

This panel seeks papers exploring the interconnections between Emerson and William James. Topics may include their shared philosophical, religious, or literary perspectives; their transnational influence; biographical connections; philosophical disagreements; or blended comparisons (e.g. “Emerson’s pragmatism” or “James’s transcendentalism”). Papers with interdisciplinary perspectives—philosophy, psychological, ecology, religious studies, etc.—are especially welcome.

Please send a title and an approximately 250-word abstract to thomas.howard@wustl.edu by January 12, 2024.