

Whitman Studies Association: Call for Papers: American Literature Association Conference (May 23-26, 2024)

Session 1: Correspondences: The Significance of Whitman's Letters

In light of the recent publication of Whitman's complete correspondence on the [Walt Whitman Archive](#), the Whitman Studies Association invites proposals focused on letters and letter writing. Whitman's two-way correspondence traces his development from local journalist to international poet and maps onto key postal innovations of his age—from letters smuggled through the newspaper exchange to telegrams and postcards. We seek presentations that engage with this corpus to interrogate issues such as:

- Editing digital correspondence projects
- Major correspondents and correspondent networks
- Correspondence and journalism (letters to the editor, pitch letters, exchanges with magazine editors)
- Correspondence and publishing (letters to publishers, printers, publishing houses)
- Co-responding in Whitman's poetry and prose
- Media-theoretical questions and the materiality of correspondence
- Whitman's (inter)national self-promotion via letter exchanges
- Letters in the context of old age and posterity (via *With Walt Whitman in Camden*)
- Enclosures and keepsake exchanges
- Comparative analyses
- Sentimental bonds and imagined distances
- Love letters and romantic exchanges
- Visualizations, digital analyses, and data mining
- Delay, anticipation, and uncertainty in postal exchanges
- Correspondence and travel (letters exchanged during journeys or about excursions)
- Handwriting and form
- Confidentiality and trust in the context of postal censorship or promotional republication (Emerson letter)
- Letters as collectors' items
- Fame, fandom, and fan letters
- Letters and amanuensis
- Uncertain and/or as yet Unidentified correspondents
- Letters, archives, and archival theory
- Letters and pedagogy (teaching with letters and digital correspondence projects)

Please submit proposals of c. 250 words to schoeberlein@tamcut.edu and stephanie-blalock@uiowa.edu by January 15, 2024. Contributors may be invited to submit expanded versions of their work for publication in the *Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*.

Session 2: Democracy and Gender in Alcott and Whitman

This session aims to pull together critical reflections on Walt Whitman's and Louisa May Alcott's thinking about democracy. We are especially interested in comparative papers that explore the role of gender in theories of democracy—for instance, the ways Whitman links democracy to “manly love” in the *Calamus* cluster or the ways Alcott imagines a more inclusive society in terms of “a loving league of sisters” in *Work*. We also welcome proposals that consider examinations of Whitman's and Alcott's ideas about democracy in relation to race, queer and trans identities, and contemporary political thought and media.

This session is co-sponsored by the Whitman Studies Association and the Louisa May Alcott Society. One-page proposals should be sent to Stephanie Blalock (stephanie-blalock@uiowa.edu) and Gregory Eiselein (eiselei@ksu.edu) by January 15, 2024.