

**American Religion and Literature Society
ALA 2024**

**Panel 1:
American Literary Naturalism and Religion**

Canonical and noncanonical American naturalists evinced a complex and ongoing interest in religious matters. For this panel, jointly organized by the Society for the Study of American Literary Naturalism and the American Religion and Literature Society, we invite scholars to examine American literary naturalism's engagement with religious ideas and practices. The intersection of American literary naturalism and religion presents a rich area for exploration, offering scholars the opportunity to analyze how authors understood the relationship between the deterministic forces of nature and the religious dimensions of American life.

Potential approaches include but are not limited to:

Reevaluation of Naturalist Assumptions – Authors could investigate how American literary naturalism challenges or reinforces traditional religious beliefs, analyzing the ways naturalist narratives engage with questions of morality, free will, and the existence of divinity.

Explore the Religious Dimensions in Naturalist Texts – Authors could examine the presence of religious themes, motifs, and symbolism in naturalistic works, considering how authors negotiated the tension between deterministic natural forces and the religious aspects of human experience.

Authorial Perspectives on Religion – Authors could investigate the beliefs of naturalist authors, exploring how figures such as Stephen Crane, Theodore Dreiser, Jack London, Frank Norris, and Upton Sinclair grapple with or embrace religious ideas in their work.

Comparative Analysis – Authors could compare American literary naturalism with religious texts or explore parallels with religious narratives from other cultural traditions, examining how naturalist perspectives intersect with or diverge from other religious worldviews.

Examine Social and Cultural Contexts – Authors could explore the impact of social and cultural change on the portrayal of religion in American naturalism, investigating how issues such as industrialization, urbanization, and scientific advancements influenced the depiction of religious beliefs in naturalist literature.

Evolution and Religion – Authors could examine how authors engage with religious concepts and practices in the context of evolutionary science, exploring the ways religious ideas are reinterpreted, challenged, or reaffirmed in the face of evolutionary theory. Authors could consider how authors negotiated the tensions between religious faith and the scientific understanding of evolution.

Please submit abstracts of no more than 300 words to andrew_ball@emerson.edu by January 15. Please include a brief biographical note with your submission.

**Panel 2:
Religious (In)tolerance and Geopolitics in American Literature**

This panel seeks to offer a robust and timely discussion about the relationship between religious intolerance and American literature. We are especially interested in papers attuned to transnational and geopolitical frameworks, given the global contexts impacting the resurgence of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in contemporary U.S. culture. While scholars have long noted how American literature has shaped nativist discourses and shifting conceptions of religious difference within the U.S., they have less often attended to the geopolitical contexts underlying these discourses. And yet, our current moment calls us to this work. In this spirit, our panel asks: how have geopolitical events influenced imaginings of religious “others” within the United States? How have U.S. literary representations of religious difference, pluralism, and (in)tolerance shaped discourses on global politics? And more broadly speaking, how has American literature affirmed and/or challenged the notion of religious “tolerance” in and outside of the U.S.? This panel invites papers from across any period of American literature.

Those interested are asked to submit an abstract of no more than 200-300 words and a brief bio of no more than 100 words to anamaria.clawson@snc.edu by January 15.