

CALL FOR PAPERS  
**Flannery O'Connor Society**  
American Literature Association  
2024 Annual Conference  
May 23-26, 2024  
Palmer House Hilton | Chicago, IL

The Flannery O'Connor Society seeks proposals for three planned sessions at ALA 2024 in Chicago. See panel descriptions and submission details below under the appropriate headings.

1. "Writing Back to Flannery O'Connor" (Co-Sponsored with African American Literature & Culture Society)
2. Open Topics Panel
3. "Flannery O'Connor's *Why Do the Heathen Rage?*: Making Sense of an Unearthed Third Novel In Progress"

**See panel descriptions and proposal details below:**

**1. "Writing Back to Flannery O'Connor"**

The African American Literature and Culture Society *and* The Flannery O'Connor Society seek proposals for an in-person panel to be held at the American Literature Association's Annual Conference, taking place May 23-26, 2024, in Chicago, IL.

This panel broadly seeks abstract proposals that engage with Flannery O'Connor's relationship to Black writers, Black writers' relationships to her work, and the heated public and academic responses since 2020 to O'Connor's legacy of race and racism—both in her fiction and correspondence, as well as in the diverse contemporary literature classroom. We are primarily interested in proposals that center authors who might not be often considered alongside O'Connor's body of work. For example, in Hilton Als's chapter "This Lonesome Place" in his 2013 collection of essays called *White Girls*, he speculates on the unrealized meeting of O'Connor and James Baldwin that O'Connor denied due to the social codes of Georgia she adhered to, likens O'Connor's "Christ hauntings" to Baldwin's own experience with religion and preaching, and even gestures at the similarities in Samuel L. Jackson's final monologue in *Pulp Fiction* to the syntax of someone like Hazel Motes in *Wise Blood*. These intertextual relationships point to what Als calls the "uneasy and unavoidable union between Black and white," and these relationships urge us to reapproach authorial influence and canonicity.

While we invite proposals that more broadly speak to O'Connor's work and race, the following intertextual topics are areas of special interest:

- How have Black writers "written back" to the South envisioned by O'Connor?
- Which Black influencers on O'Connor's writing warrant more attention?

- Responses to the Emory University’s [“At the Crossroads with Benny Andrews, Flannery O’Connor, and Alice Walker”](#) exhibit, open at the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library.
- How do students respond to teaching O’Connor in conversation with Black authors in the context of antiracist efforts? How do we teach O’Connor in diverse classrooms?
- Where does O’Connor fit in the context of contemporary “bans” on “divisive” books and the teaching of Critical Race Theory?
- How did the engagement with race and civil rights of O’Connor’s contemporaries compare or contrast with her own?
- How do we read O’Connor alongside Black authors and artists?

Please send abstracts of 250 words to Jean-Philippe Marcoux ([Jean-Philippe.Marcoux@lit.ulaval.ca](mailto:Jean-Philippe.Marcoux@lit.ulaval.ca)), Matt Bryant Cheney ([mbryantc@utk.edu](mailto:mbryantc@utk.edu)), and Anthony Szczesiul ([Anthony\\_Szczesiul@uml.edu](mailto:Anthony_Szczesiul@uml.edu)) by January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2024. In your submission, please include a title, your name, institutional affiliation(s), and current email address. Participants must be members of The Flannery O’Connor Society or the African American Literature and Culture Society by the time of the conference. More information about the African American Literature and Culture Society, including how to join, can be found at [their website](#). More information about the Flannery O’Connor Society, including how to join, can be found on [their website](#).

## 2. Open Topics Panel

The Flannery O’Connor Society invites abstracts (of no more than 250 words) for open topic presentations at the annual conference of the American Literature Association. (<https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>).

Possible paper topics include, but are not limited to:

- Film and media adaptations of O’Connor’s life and work, including the recent biopic, *Wildcat*, or Colin Cutler’s new rock album [Tarwater](#)
- Intra/intertextual evaluations of O’Connor’s work in relation to other authors, genres, and media, or between texts
- O’Connor and modernism/postmodernism
- Ability and disability in O’Connor’s life and work
- Class concerns and social status for O’Connor and her characters
- Place, region, and politics in O’Connor’s letters and fiction
- Aesthetic and rhetorical approaches to O’Connor’s fiction
- Approaches to teaching Flannery O’Connor’s work
- Gender and sexuality in O’Connor’s fiction, as well as evaluations of the body of criticism on gender and sexuality in O’Connor’s work
- Canonicity and O’Connor in Southern Literature
- New critical and theoretical frameworks for O’Connor studies

While we are hoping for work on the above topics, we will accept proposals for a wide variety of topics about and/or related to Flannery O’Connor’s oeuvre.

Please send abstracts to Dr. Rachel Bryan ([rbryan5@vols.utk.edu](mailto:rbryan5@vols.utk.edu)) by **Saturday, January 20th, 2024**. Please include your name, email, and a short bio (100 words) with the abstract. Presenters must be members of the Flannery O'Connor Society by the time of the conference. Information about the conference's fee and reserved hotel rate can be found on ALA's CFP (<https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>). Information about the Society, including how to join, can be found on the Flannery O'Connor Society Website (<http://flannerysociety.org>).

### 3. "Flannery O'Connor's *Why Do the Heathen Rage?*: Making Sense of an Unearthed Third Novel In Progress"

Since the publication of "An Afternoon In the Woods" in 1988's *Library of America* collection of O'Connor, glimpses of unpublished O'Connor fiction have only appeared in brief descriptions or quotations. In January 2024, *Flannery O'Connor's Why Do the Heathen Rage?: A Behind the Scenes Look of a Work In Progress* (Ed. Jessica Hooten Wilson) will offer the most complete glimpse to date into O'Connor's 348 pages of notes and typewritten pages toward her unfinished novel, *Why Do the Heathen Rage?*, an excerpt of which was published by *Esquire* in 1963. In addition to the manuscript excerpts, the book features original [illustrations from Steven Prince](#) and extensive commentary from Hooten Wilson.

While the book's release will not occur until late January, we are looking for scholars interested in participating in a session focused on responses to this text.

Those interested in participating in the session should notify Matt Bryant Cheney ([mbryantc@utk.edu](mailto:mbryantc@utk.edu)) by **Thursday, January 25th, 2024**. Please include your name, email, a short bio (100 words), and a short rationale (no more than 200 words) for what approach you would hope to bring to the discussion. Presenters must be members of the Flannery O'Connor Society by the time of the conference. Information about the conference's fee and reserved hotel rate can be found on ALA's CFP (<https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference/>). Information about the Society, including how to join, can be found on the Flannery O'Connor Society Website (<http://flannerysociety.org>).