

The Thoreau Society: Call for Proposals, American Literature Association 2024

The Thoreau Society is pleased to sponsor two sessions at the 35th Annual American Literature Association conference on May 23-26 in Chicago.

Panel: Thoreau and Capital

Thoreau proudly began his enterprise at Walden Pond with minimal capital, and his two years there might be seen as a performance piece in protest of the capitalist regime he decried in its early iteration in 19th century Massachusetts – even as he learned to navigate the literary and economic marketplace of his time. We welcome proposals that examine Thoreau’s relationship to capitalism in his own era and his relevance to capitalism in our own. How does Thoreau’s work connect to contemporary debates about property, development, labor, free soil, and an evolving global capitalist world? How might Thoreau’s interest in natural history and his nascent ecology, or his fascination with Native Americans, shape his understanding of capitalism? And how does his effort to reimagine his own world inform our understanding of our own – what Roy Scranton has termed the “zombie capitalism” of the 21st century? Please send 200 word abstracts for 15-minute presentations by January 15th, 2024, to jkucich@bridgew.edu and k.kelly@northeastern.edu.

Roundtable: Thoreau and Disobedience

Lawrence Buell’s recent book on Thoreau centers on disobedience as the lynchpin of Thoreau’s life and writing. How might we read Thoreau’s disobedience – or read Thoreau disobediently? We seek brief considerations of Thoreau’s engagement with the law, his conflicted relationship to local and national politics, his conception of natural law vs. civil law, or his encounters with and reimagining of the state. We also welcome considerations of writers and activists who offer a useful point of reference to Thoreau’s work in any era or place. Please send 100-word abstracts for 5-7 minute presentations by January 15th, 2024, to jkucich@bridgew.edu and k.kelly@northeastern.edu.