

The Thoreau Society invites paper proposals for the following two sessions, to take place at ALA in Boston, May 21-24, 2025 (<https://americanliteratureassociation.org/ala-conferences/ala-annual-conference>). Please submit abstracts of around 300 words, along with a CV, to Alex Moskowitz (amoskowitz@mtholyoke.edu) by 15 January 2025. And please feel free to reach out with questions or ideas beforehand!

Panel: Thoreau, Protest, and Social Change

Social change, antislavery activism, and reform were central questions for nearly every nineteenth-century writer in the U.S. This panel seeks to position Thoreau more explicitly within this milieu of radical thought. While Thoreau traditionally has been read as an isolationist, a hermit, or recluse, this panel hopes to identify how Thoreauvian thought has contributed to or was a part of collective action, from the nineteenth century to today. From the concept of Civil Disobedience to Thoreau's own involvement in the antislavery movement, this panel asks how we might reread Thoreau as embedded in a social world focused on addressing inequality, rather than standing apart from it. We invite papers that consider Thoreau's anti-capitalist thinking, his antislavery commitments, and the political afterlives of his work and thought. We welcome as well papers that bring a similar approach to nineteenth-century social change more broadly, both within and beyond Transcendentalist circles.

Roundtable: Thoreau in the Capitalocene

What does Thoreau have to tell us about the relation between climate catastrophe and the insatiable form of capital that is driving climate change? This roundtable seeks to move beyond readings of Thoreau as a thinker merely of the Anthropocene, and to forge connections between the environmental Thoreau and the political Thoreau, or, what Rebecca Solnit has termed "the Thoreau problem." As theorists of the capitalocene and the plantationocene have pointed out, the concept of the Anthropocene reifies a Western, universalist perspective that places the blame for climate change on all people equally. Rather, the concept of the capitalocene demands that we recognize that those of us in the West and the Global North—spurred on by capital's need for limitless growth—are primarily responsible for climate change.

In line with these thinkers, we are interested in papers that ask how Thoreau and Thoreauvian perspectives can help us understand how the development of nineteenth-century capital and its dependency on enslaved labor contributed to or laid the foundations for the climate crisis. How, for example, does the development of a nineteenth-century capitalism based on the extraction of enslaved labor relate to our current form of extractive capital, which depends on the extraction of fossil fuels? How might we reread nineteenth-century labor history anew—as Andreas Malm does in *Fossil Capital*—to reconsider the intertwined origins of our current crisis as being bound up in nineteenth-century technologies of (enslaved) labor discipline and organization? We welcome papers that engage Thoreau or Thoreauvian thought on any and all of these issues, as well as papers that seek to open up conversations between Thoreau and other theorists of extraction—from Karl Marx and Janae Davis, to Naomi Klein and Jason Moore—the climate crisis, and the development of modern political economy.