

Call for Papers
Whitman Studies Association
American Literature Association
37th Annual Conference,
May 20-23, 2026,
Palmer House
17 East Monroe Street, Chicago, IL 60603

Panel: Walt Whitman in the Classroom: Teaching America's Poet

Walt Whitman proclaimed himself the "Poet of America," and he is often referred to as "the Poet of Democracy" for his open, radical poetry and his essays on politics, poetics, and democratic society. This panel seeks to explore, update, reevaluate and expand our understanding of what it means to teach Walt Whitman today. The Whitman Studies Association is asking for submissions interrogating the presence or absence of Walt Whitman and his writings in our classrooms, the joys and the challenges of engaging students in conversation about or in protest of Whitman, his writings, his understanding of democracy, and his vision for an America that will turn 250 in 2026.

The Whitman Studies Association invites proposals focused on any aspect of Walt Whitman and pedagogy. We welcome presentations that explore and analyze Whitman and/or his writings in the classroom, including:

- Whitman's current relevance for undergraduate and/or graduate students
- Whitman in high school or continuing education
- Whitman's current relevance for online students and/or non-traditional students
- Whitman and *Democratic Vistas* (1871)
- Teaching any of Whitman's fiction, journalism, poetry, or correspondence
- Whitman and open access; democratization of information
- Whitman and theories of pedagogy
- Whitman between "cancelled" writer and "national hero"
- Creative Syllabi, Assignments, or class projects that engage students with Whitman's work
- Teaching Whitman in geographic, regional, and/or urban and rural contexts
- Tracing Whitman's developing and evolving ideas about democracy and the nation
- Whitman as inspiration for or part of teaching about social movements, reform, and protest

- Teaching Whitman in international contexts
- Whitman as America's poet; Whitman's America
- Challenges to / Rejections of Whitman's ideas about and visions of democracy and the nation
- Walt Whitman as banned or challenged text in libraries and classrooms
- Whitman and digital technologies | digital pedagogy | social media in classes

Please submit a proposal (c. 250 words) and a brief bio (c. 150 words) to the panel organizers by Monday, January 12, 2026:

Stephanie M. Blalock, University of Iowa (stephanie-blalock@uiowa.edu)

Stefan Schöberlein, Texas A&M University–Central Texas (schoeberlein@tamuct.edu)

Roundtable

The Whitman Studies Association will host a roundtable to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the publication of *Breaking Bounds: Whitman and American Cultural Studies* (Oxford UP, 1996), edited by Betsy Erkkila and Jay Grossman at the American Literature Association's 37th Annual Conference. Jay Grossman will serve as a respondent.

We seek proposals for brief presentations that reflect on the legacy of *Breaking Bounds*, new trends in Whitman scholarship that have emerged over the past 30 years, or the place of Whitman himself within American literary and cultural studies.

Please submit a proposal (c. 250 words) and a brief bio (c. 150 words) to the roundtable organizer by Monday, January 12, 2026:

Edward Whitley, Lehigh University (edw204@lehigh.edu).