

**Call for Papers | Society of Early Americanists**  
**American Literature Association | 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference | May 20–23, 2026**

The Society of Early Americanists (<https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org>) will propose four panels for the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the American Literature Association, to be held May 20–23, 2026 at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago, Illinois. Please send short abstracts (no more than 250 words) and brief bios to Joshua Bartlett at [jcbartlett@gmail.com](mailto:jcbartlett@gmail.com) by **Monday, January 26, 2026**.

**Panel #1 | New Directions in Early American Poetry Studies**

This panel will develop and expand upon conversations about **new directions in early American poetry studies** begun at the SEA-sponsored panel on this topic to be convened during the ALA’s “American Poetry: A Symposium” (March 26–28, 2026).

Papers and presentations are invited that highlight new directions and recent developments in the study of early American poetry and poetics. Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- New readings/re-readings of canonical early American poems and poetry.
- Revisitations of “classic” critical and scholarly works that have shaped the field of early American poetry studies.
- Developments in archival work and/or digital humanities projects.
- Pedagogical strategies for teaching early American poetry.
- New theoretical approaches and/or keywords for study of early American poetry/poetics.
- The relevance of early American poetry in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Why early American poetry now?
- Pressing questions for and/or critical gaps in early American poetry studies.

Please send short abstracts (no more than 250 words) and brief bios to Joshua Bartlett at [jcbartlett@gmail.com](mailto:jcbartlett@gmail.com) by Monday, January 26, 2026.

**Panel #2 | Placing Chicago in Early American Studies**

Acknowledging our conference setting and anticipating the 2027 SEA Biennial, this panel invites papers and presentations that explore **the literature, culture, and history of Chicago** prior to its March 1837 incorporation. **What is (or should be) Chicago’s place within the field of early American studies?** Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Pre-1837 literary depictions of Chicago – as well as Chicago’s presence in early American newspaper/magazine/periodical culture.
- Maps (and mapping) of early Chicago and other spatial/visual representations.
- Indigenous Chicago and/or Chicago’s history of Indian Removal.
- Connections between pre-1837 Chicago texts and the literature of the Chicago Renaissance.
- Natural histories and/or environmental histories of early Chicago.
- Chicago and New France; missionary work/writing; Chicago and settler colonialism.
- Recent developments in early Chicago archival work and/or digital humanities project.

Please send short abstracts (no more than 250 words) and brief bios to Joshua Bartlett at [jcbartlett@gmail.com](mailto:jcbartlett@gmail.com) by Monday, January 26, 2026.

### Panel #3 | Teaching Early American Literature Outside the Survey Course (Roundtable)

While recent decades have seen significant shifts in pedagogical approaches to early American literature, most undergraduate students (including many English majors) still obtain the bulk of their early American literary knowledge from some version of a broad survey course. Recognizing the potential limitations of such encounters, then, this roundtable asks: **Where else in our curricula are we (or should we be) teaching early American literary texts?**

Short papers, provocations, and/or presentations are invited that offer specific responses to this question. Roundtable participants will begin the discussion – and audience members will be encouraged to respond and contribute throughout the conversation. Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Pairing early American writings with more contemporary texts.
- Including early American literature in theme-based courses.
- Developing upper-level courses in pre-1830 American literature that attract student enrollment and maintain student enthusiasm.
- Incorporating early American literature in creative writing courses.
- Combining early American texts and elements of visual and/or material culture.
- Applying early American literature to disciplines outside the humanities.

Please send short abstracts (no more than 250 words) and brief bios to Joshua Bartlett at [jcbartlett@gmail.com](mailto:jcbartlett@gmail.com) by Monday, January 26, 2026.

### Panel #4 | *Errand into the Wilderness* at 70

Upon the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his *Errand into the Wilderness*, this panel invites papers and presentations that offer **critical examinations and new interpretations of work by the intellectual historian (and Chicago native) Perry Miller**. Topics might include (but are not limited to):

- Miller’s intellectual “legacy” – the influence of his work on the historical trajectories of early American studies (and on American Studies as a scholarly discipline) – as well as the continued impact of his arguments on contemporary scholarship.
- Readings of early American texts that engage with Miller’s scholarship in prominent fashion.
- Critiques and/or criticisms of Miller’s work from theoretical or methodological perspectives.
- Biographical and/or archival work related to Miller and the milieu of mid-century Harvard.
- Contemporary readings/critiques of Miller’s foundational “epiphany” in the Congo.
- Pedagogical approaches to incorporating Miller’s work in classroom settings.

Proposals that focus on aspects of *Errand into the Wilderness* are particularly encouraged – but proposals on any/all facets of Miller’s work and/or his other publications are quite welcome.

Please send short abstracts (no more than 250 words) and brief bios to Joshua Bartlett at [jcbartlett@gmail.com](mailto:jcbartlett@gmail.com) by Monday, January 26, 2026.