

Call for Papers American Literature Association (ALA) 2026, Chicago

The **American Humor Studies Association (AHS)** plans to offer two panels.

One panel, “Teaching with Humor” will explore, through specific examples, how humor, in its many forms—literary, visual, performative—can enhance the learning process and make it vivid and more engaging. The panel will examine the multiple ways that teachers in disciplines such as literature and other humanities can employ the humor found in literary texts, cartoons, films, songs, memes and media for a richer understanding of the subject matter.

The second panel will explore the following puzzle. We've all experienced things that are meant to be funny not being funny (for a variety of reasons), or, we think utterances or texts or performance laughable that are said and done in earnest—and with genuine sincerity and seriousness. The second panel will focus on issues for reader/audience reception and authorial intent. When does the sincere become ludicrous or ridiculous in various cultural artifacts texts, performances, video/film, memes? When “really meaning it” results in “that's so silly, absurd, awkward, or unexpected,” do we learn something new or lose something important (or both, or neither)? Alternatively, what dynamic is in play when what is intended as laughable fails?

Deadline

Please send a 250-word abstract and a brief biography by January 15, 2026 to either one of AHS's co-presidents, Teresa Prados-Torreira (tprados-torreira@colum.edu) or Jim Caron (caron@hawaii.edu). All panel participants must be AHS members before the ALA conference opens on May 20th.

The Constance Rourke travel award is available for graduate students on a panel. The award varies between \$100 – \$300 (depending on AHS funds and the number of applicants) to help defray the cost of attending conferences with AHS-sponsored panels. We also remind everyone that AHS has in place a mentoring program to help emerging scholars prepare an essay for publication. Presenting at ALA can be the first step to being published.