

CALL FOR PAPERS
American Religion and Literature Society
American Literature Association
37th Annual Conference
May 20-23, 2026
The Palmer House Hilton
17 East Monroe Street
Chicago, IL 60603

The American Religion and Literature Society will sponsor three sessions at the 2026 national meeting of the American Literature Association. Please submit an abstract of no more than 500 words to Ray Horton, rhorton3@murraystate.edu. In your email, please indicate the session for which you are proposing a paper. Be sure to include your name, institutional affiliation, email address, and any AV requests. Electronic submissions only, in Word or PDF format. The deadline for submission to the ARLS is **January 23, 2026**. Because panel information is due to the ALA by January 30, decisions about all submissions will be made and communicated promptly following this deadline.

1. Religious Trauma and American Literature

In recent years, few topics related to religion and culture have captured the popular imagination as broadly as the experience and study of religious trauma. As philosopher Michelle Panchuk reflects, “Perhaps one reason the public is currently mesmerized by stories of religious trauma is their apparent incongruence. Religion purports to offer something nourishing and true—something that will bring people closer to God, their fellow humans, and the universe,” an incongruence that proves “all the more horrifying when religion harms rather than heals.” What can the study of religion in American literature, broadly defined, contribute to the growing popular, philosophical, and even psychological discourses surrounding religious trauma? And how might recent developments in the study of religious trauma—including but not limited to studies of its philosophical, cultural, and psychological impact—contribute to studies of the religious, secular, and postsecular in American literature?

2. Open Topic: Religion and American Literature

We invite submissions that explore any topic related to the religious, the secular, or the postsecular in American literature. Topics of particular interest to the ARLS include, but are by no means limited to: the study of Catholicism in American literature in light of the appointment of the first American Pope; the influence of religious traditions other than Christianity on American writers or literary movements, particularly writers or movements belonging to American religious minorities or otherwise minoritized communities; and the religious, secular, or postsecular dimensions of writers associated with Chicago.