CALL FOR PAPERS
MELUS 2027 | Albuquerque, New Mexico
"Imaginaries and Insurgencies: Speculative Visions in Multiethnic Culture"
Hosted by the MELUS Ad Hoc Conference Committee
Venue: Isleta Resort & Casino, Pueblo of Isleta, New Mexico
Conference Dates: Thursday, April 8 – Sunday, April 11, 2027

CONFERENCE THEME
Multiethnic writers and artists have long wielded imagination as a tool of liberation, using speculative fiction, magical realism, graphic narrative, experimental form, and visionary thinking to refuse the limits of the real and imagine radically different worlds. MELUS invites scholars to explore how multiethnic cultures use speculative and insurgent forms to interrogate identity, challenge power, and dream futures beyond the constraints of the present. We welcome submissions on science fiction, fantasy, utopian thought, multimedia experimentation, and all forms of creative world-building that center multiethnic voices and visions.

The speculative has never been an escape from history for writers of color and Indigenous writers. It has been a method for holding two things at once: an accounting of what was done, and a working model of what might be done instead. The slave ship becomes a spacecraft, the reservation becomes a colony under occupation, the border becomes a membrane between worlds. These are not metaphors laid over the record; they are instruments for reading it. At a moment when curricula are being narrowed, archives defunded, and whole literatures legislated out of classrooms, the capacity to imagine otherwise is not ornament. It is infrastructure.

The 2027 conference invites work that takes that capacity seriously as craft, as theory, and as politics. We are interested in the formal machinery of speculation as much as its content — how a novel builds a world, how a poem holds a future in its line breaks, how a comic renders a cosmology in six panels. We welcome criticism, creative work, pedagogy, and the kinds of writing that refuse to stay on one side of that line.

CONFERENCE CONTEXT & LOCATION
Albuquerque sits where the Rio Grande corridor, the Camino Real, and Route 66 cross, a city shaped by Pueblo, Nuevomexicano, Diné, Black, and immigrant communities whose histories do not resolve into a single American story. It is a center for film and television production, for Native and Chicanx arts, and for a science and technology sector whose origins in the weapons laboratories of the high desert make the speculative genres feel less like invention than reportage. It is, in short, a place where the questions this conference asks are already being lived.

MELUS 2027 convenes at Isleta Resort & Casino, on the lands of the Pueblo of Isleta just south of Albuquerque. New Mexico has never hosted a MELUS conference, and this will be the first time the annual meeting gathers on Pueblo land. That setting is not incidental to the theme. As

Deondre Smiles notes in “The Settler Logics of (Outer) Space,” the vocabulary of exploration and speculative fiction — words such as “frontier,” phrases such as “first contact” — resonates very differently when read against Indigenous knowledge and history. Thinking through Indigenous responses to placemaking and futurity expands our understanding of world and identity beyond the colonial gaze.

TOPICS OF INTEREST

We invite individual paper, panel, and roundtable proposals that examine multiethnic American literature and culture — novels, short fiction, poetry, drama, comics, film, television, games, sound, and performance — and that engage themes including:

- Afrofuturism, Indigenous futurisms, Latine futurism, and Asian American and Arab American speculative traditions
- Speculative form as political method: utopia, dystopia, and the refusal of realism
- Magical realism, the fantastic, and the marvelous real
- Science fiction, fantasy, and horror in multiethnic traditions
- Graphic narrative, comics, and visual world-building
- Tradition and technology in multiethnic literature
- Identity and climate futures: cli-fi, extraction, sustainability
- Colonial, postcolonial, decolonial, and anticolonial approaches
- Placemaking, land, and the politics of setting
- Reclamation, repatriation, and the archive
- Indigenous knowledge, futurity, and the settler logics of space
- Borderlands speculation and the literatures of the U.S. Southwest
- Speculative approaches to migration, borders, and citizenship
- Language, translation, and invented or recovered tongues
- AI, algorithmic culture, and multiethnic narrative
- Game studies, interactive fiction, and participatory world-building
- Speculative film, television, and streaming
- Music, sound, and sonic futurism
- Performance, embodiment, and speculative staging
- Speculative poetics
- Pedagogies of the speculative; teaching under censorship and book bans
- The future of ethnic studies and the humanities
- Period and genre histories of multiethnic speculative writing
- Creative work: speculative fiction, poetry, and hybrid forms

SUBMISSION FORMATS

We welcome:

- Individual paper proposals (250-word abstract)
- Full panel proposals (3–4 papers, 500-word panel description plus individual abstracts)
- Roundtable discussions (4–6 participants, 500-word description)
- Creative readings (poetry, fiction, nonfiction, performance)
- Alternative formats (workshops, screenings, performances, digital exhibits)
- Lightning talks (5-minute presentations as part of a curated session)

- Poster presentations (especially encouraged for graduate students)

MELUS is committed to building inclusive and accessible scholarly spaces, and we especially encourage submissions from graduate students, contingent faculty, independent scholars, artists, and community organizers. Limited travel and hotel grants will be available to support participation from historically underrepresented groups and those with financial need.

IMPORTANT DATES

- Submission Deadline: Friday, November 20, 2026
- Notification of Acceptance: Friday, January 15, 2027
- Early Registration Deadline: Friday, February 5, 2027
- Conference Dates: April 8–11, 2027

SUBMISSION & CONTACT INFORMATION

Submit proposals at: Submittable
Questions? Contact: Sherry Johnson at <johnsshe@gvsu.edu>

MELUS (The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States) is dedicated to the scholarly study of the multi-ethnic literatures of the United States. Since its founding in 1973, MELUS has advocated for the recognition, study, and teaching of multiethnic literature, creating spaces for critical conversation across disciplines, methodologies, and perspectives.