

**Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers
Twenty-eighth Annual Conference
November 6-9, 2025 at The
Ohio State University.**

Call for Papers

Conference Committee for 2025:

Hannibal Hamlin, The Ohio State University
Rebecca Rainof, University of California-Berkeley
Meg Tyler, Boston University
Ernest Suarez, Catholic University

Please note: everybody who participates must be a current member of the ALSCW. We encourage participation by creative writers, scholars, critics, secondary school teachers, and others interested in literature. The 2025 membership rate for new members and people making under \$65,000 a year is \$75. Regular memberships are \$125. Membership includes a year's subscription to *Literary Imagination* (Johns Hopkins UP) and to *Literary Matters* (our online journal). Subscribing to *Literary Imagination* is the same as joining or renewing your membership in the ALSCW (<https://alscw.press.jhu.edu/membership/join>). Visit our website for detailed information (alscw.org).

All ALSCW members are eligible to submit paper proposals for the seminars listed below. Unless otherwise noted, plenary panel presentations are by invitation only. (The plenary panels are listed at the end.)

Proposals of approximately 300 words and a C.V. should be sent as email attachments to Hannibal Hamlin at <hamlin.22@osu.edu> and Ernest Suarez at <Suarez@cua.edu> on or before June 10, 2025. Please title your attachments as follows: surname and first initial.seminar number.abstract or cv. For example: smitha.seminar1.abstract or smitha.seminar1.cv

Seminars

1) “The Weary Blues” at 100

Moderator: Matthew Kilbane, Glynn Family Honors Assistant Professor of English, The University of Notre Dame

When Langston Hughes wrote “The Weary Blues” in 1925, he took the audacious step of directly incorporating blues lyrics in order to restage the captivating spectacle of a Harlem blues performance. For its elegant, haunting exploration of the speaker’s vexed identification with a Harlem musician, the result has become a landmark of the Harlem Renaissance. This first “blues poem” also inaugurated the encounter between poetry and Black popular music that would occupy Hughes, in various forms, for the rest of his career. This seminar seizes the occasion of this poem’s centenary to shake loose some new thinking on “The Weary Blues,” *The Weary Blues* (Hughes’s first collection, published the next year), Hughes’s relation to Black music across his lifetime, and the study of poetry and popular music more broadly. Hughes designed “The Weary Blues” as a “temple of tomorrow”: who has been worshipping in and renovating this temple since 1925? We welcome papers from scholars and creative writers both.

2) Anton Chekhov’s Stories: “Those Last Notes Which Complete the Harmony”

Moderator: Diana Senechal, Varga Katalin Gimnázium, Szolnok, Hungary

The playwright, story writer, and physician Anton Chekhov has influenced writers ranging from Woolf to Babel to Carver, in part because of the inconclusiveness of his fiction. In her essay “The Russian Point of View,” Virginia Woolf wrote, “Where the tune is familiar and the end emphatic—lovers united, villains discomfited, intrigues exposed—as it is in most Victorian fiction, we can scarcely go wrong, but where the tune is unfamiliar and the end a note of interrogation or merely the information that they went on talking, as it is in Tchekov, we need a very daring and alert sense of literature to make us hear the tune, and in particular those last notes which complete the harmony.”

Our seminar will focus on the way Chekhov’s stories end. What do we make of them (the endings and the stories themselves)? What challenges arise in their interpretation? What are “those last notes which complete the harmony”? How do the endings affect our understanding of the whole? What earlier details do they bring out? What kind of surprise do they hold? A knowledge of Russian is welcome but not required. Papers should focus on specific Chekhov stories (singly or in concert) and should be 10-15 pages long. Any quotations from the original Russian texts should come with translations so that all participants can understand them. While we will try to touch on “Misery,” “Happiness,” “Rothschild’s Violin,” “The Student,” “At Home,” “Gooseberries,” “The Man in the Case,” “Ward No. 6,” and “The Lady with the Dog” (or at least a few of these), you are welcome to take up any of his stories, including longer works such as “The Duel” and “Three Years.”

3) Teaching Literature in the Midst of a “Reading Crisis”

Moderators: Taryn Okuma, Clinical Ordinary Professor, The Catholic University of America and Rebecca Vaccaro, English Department Chair, Bishop Ireton High School

Rose Horowitch’s November 2024 article “The Elite College Students Who Can’t Read Books” in *The Atlantic* was widely discussed in the media and the world of education due to its claim

that students at even the most prestigious universities never read a full-length book in the course of finishing their degrees. This seminar seeks pedagogical responses to the idea that we are currently experiencing a growing “reading crisis” of students in our classrooms who cannot or will not read books. We invite papers from high school, community college, and college and university literature instructors addressing any of the following questions:

Why have students’ reading attention-spans have diminished so noticeably? Is it due to Common Core standards in high schools, the dominance of social media, losses and shifts in academic standards and expectations as a result of the pandemic, societal emphasis on professional skills over humanistic learning, etc.? What is at the root of this problem and how can understanding the nature of the problem help us to address it as educators? How are we experiencing this “reading crisis” in our own classrooms?

Given the fact that our students are learning in a time that is radically different from the time in which we were students (consider just the examples of the pandemic’s shift to virtual learning and the ubiquity of AI), do we need to reframe or reconsider our goals as teachers of literature? How can we impart our conviction that literature is important and vital to students (and to other audiences: administrators, colleagues in other disciplines, etc.)?

How can we think about curriculum and/or course design, lesson plans, reading lists, and/or assignments in ways that will help to convey the importance of reading literature to students and help to teach them to love reading? Are there extra-curricular ways we, as literature teachers, can address this “reading crisis”?

4) Still Reading Dante, After All These Years

Moderator: Jonathan Combs-Schilling, Associate Professor of Italian, The Ohio State University

TBA

5) Allusion as Exclusion and Inclusion: Only Connect?

Moderator: Hannibal Hamlin, Professor of English, The Ohio State University

Allusion is one of the master tropes, essential not only for reading literary works but for human communication more generally. This seminar takes allusion in a broad sense, identifying a spectrum from overt quotation to references that for various reasons are more covert, even open to question. Papers exploring all kinds of allusion in poems, plays, and prose fiction and non-fiction are welcome. Of particular interest, though, is the question of whether allusions draw readers into closer engagement with a work, welcoming them into the family of those in the know, or on the contrary serve the function of cultural and perhaps also social gatekeeping, excluding those who simply haven’t read or experienced everything the author has. Do allusions always work in both ways, or do some writers favor one mode or the other? Is there an ethics of allusion? In this time of extreme polarization—political, economic, racial, religious, gendered—

does allusion increase the distance between us, or can it offer the possibility for connecting across the barriers?

6) Confessional Writing: Memoir, Essays, and Religion

Moderator: Briallen Hopper, Associate Professor of English, Queens College, CUNY

Creative nonfiction genres like memoir and essays have religious roots. Modern memoir can famously trace its lineage back to Augustine via a host of other sacred and secular "confessions," and the practice of writing as self-examination can be traced back to early modern practices of journal-keeping as a spiritual exercise. More recently, critics including Vinson Cunningham have called attention to essays' close relationship to the sermon.

This seminar welcomes creative, critical, and pedagogical work that engages explicitly with creative nonfiction's religious forms and preoccupations. How do modern essayists and memoirists rewrite traditional religious narratives? How are religious practices and modes like confession and testifying present in creative writing? "Religion" is used capaciously here as a word gesturing towards infinite varieties of experience, practice, tradition, and belief.

7) Look! He has Come Through: D.H. Lawrence at the Present Day

Moderators: Maria DiBattista, Charles Barnwell Straut Class of 1923 Professor of English, Princeton University and Paul Franz, Editor-in-Chief, *Literary Imagination*

The present literary, critical, pedagogical, and artistic scene shows many signs of a Lawrence revival. Consider the two Lawrence-themed books brought out by FSG in 2021: biographer Frances Wilson's *Burning Man: The Trials of D. H. Lawrence* and novelist Rachel Cusk's *Second Place*, an adaptation-cum-rewriting of Mabel Dodge Luhan's *Lorenzo in Taos*. Then there is *Look! We Have Come Through!*, by Lara Feigel, in which memoir is woven together with reflections on Lawrence's poems and their own biographical circumstances. From popular culture, such as the recent Netflix adaptation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, to the (controversial) 2024 French Pléiade translations of *Women in Love* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, there is every sign that Lawrence is back. Meanwhile, anecdotal evidence suggests a growing—and often passionate—interest in Lawrence among young writers and critics, seemingly linked to a fatigue with the moralizing tone and social conformity of the early 2020s cultural scene. But what does this return to Lawrence entail? Questions to be considered include: what settings (academic, literary, and pedagogical) have seen a Lawrence resurgence, and which have not? Which aspects of Lawrence have become palatable or acceptable, and which have not? What are we to make of the recent marked interest in Lawrence among women writers? What link might there be between an interest in Lawrence and new—post-New Critical, post-poststructuralist—fascination with the authorial voice, whether in modes such as autofiction, essayistic writing, memoir, and epistolary forms, or in writing on social media platforms? If Lawrence is now resurgent, has his relation to scandal changed, or has ours?

8) A New American Indian Renaissance?

Moderators: Theresa Warburton, Associate Professor of English, Western Washington University and Elissa Washuta, Associate Professor of English, The Ohio State University

In 2018, The Paris Review published a profile of Cheyenne and Arapaho writer Tommy Orange entitled “Tommy Orange and the New Native Renaissance,” building on Kenneth Lincoln’s famed (and debated) use of the term “Native American Renaissance” to refer to the rise of interest in Native literatures in the late 20th century. In the article, author Julian Brave Noisecat (Canim Lake Band Tsq’escen) positions Orange within a ‘new wave’ of Native authors who are expanding the scene of Native literatures for the first time in almost 20 years. In this seminar, we invite papers that explore this era of Native literatures while asking questions like: are there central threads that weave together an era-defining literary tradition here? What literary genealogies extend beyond these periods and are there some that are started anew? How might we connect this articulation of a literary period to contemporaneous social and political movement? And, perhaps ultimately, what do we gain and what do we lose when we seek to periodize Native literatures in this way?

9) Poetry and Myth

Moderator: Rachel Hadas, Board of Governors Professor *emerita*, Rutgers University-Newark

In his poem “What Myth Is,” Carl Phillips offers as a definition, “Not only what lasts, but what/applies over time also.” Classicist Lowell Edmunds observes that “myths occur...at the juncture of performance with tradition.” The seminar Poetry and Myth seeks to investigate this dynamic juncture.

Myth casts a wide net. Not only poets but also classicists, translators, comparatists, and teachers of myth at the secondary, undergraduate, and graduate levels all have their own take on this perennially generative topic; I hope to hear from these various constituencies. The range of myths also extends, of course, to art and opera, film and television, graphic novels and video games, so we may well have a chance to look beyond the text.

I recently edited a special poetry issue of *Classical Outlook* ([The Classical Outlook](#)), and the seminar’s title reflects this emphasis. But I look forward to a range of papers exploring the apparently unlimited ways in which myth continues to inspire, evolve, and—as Phillips writes—to apply.

10) “It Takes a Lot to Laugh...”: Cinematic Comedy in Dark Times

Moderator: Shalom Gorewitz, Independent Filmmaker

From satire to dark comedy, political comedy in cinema has a long history of challenging social norms, critiquing political structures, and reflecting on the complexities of identity, power, and resistance. This panel seeks to engage scholars, filmmakers, comedians, and enthusiasts in a dynamic conversation about how comedy intersects with the political landscape, both past and present.

Proposals should address the following questions:

- How do comedy films use humor to critique power structures, political ideologies, and social issues?
- What is the role of comedy in challenging dominant narratives and creating spaces for marginalized voices and perspectives?
- What are the boundaries of satire in political cinema, and how does it navigate ethical and aesthetic concerns?
- How does the examination of political comedy interrogate race, gender, class, sexuality, and other aspects of identity?
- How do different cultures use comedic films to address their unique political struggles?
- Are there case studies of films that sparked political controversy or were banned due to their edgy political content?
- How do contemporary political comedy films adapt to the digital era and social media platforms?

Proposals for presentations are welcome from filmmakers, screenwriters, film critics, actors, academics, and enthusiasts of both the medium and genre.

11) Teaching the Great Books

Moderator: David Mikics, Professor of English, New College of Florida

The notion of great books requires defending in the early twenty-first century. Why do we need the label “great books”? How does it enable or enhance our reading? Proposals are welcome on all aspects of teaching or reading great books, envisioning a great books curriculum at college or high school level, or defining great books. Close readings of particular texts as well as broader reflections are invited.

12) Teaching Literature Post-Pandemic

Moderators: Katherine Larson, Professor of English, University of Toronto and Alysia Kolentsis, Associate Professor of English, University of Waterloo

Five years after the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, how might we take stock of its profound effects on teaching and learning? This session will examine the ruptures and possibilities stemming from the pandemic through the lens of literary studies, which we understand broadly to encompass the study and creation of story across historical, global, institutional, and community contexts. With its foundational focus on narrativizing and meaning-making, and its attention to the various ways stories are created, shared, and reified, literary studies offer particularly apt models for exploring the challenges and emergent paths laid bare by the pandemic and its aftermath. While as moderators we bring our experience as scholars of early modern English literature to this project, we are interested in pushing beyond those historical and geographical foundations to think in interconnected and intentionally uncolonizing ways — not

only about literature, story, and literary studies, but about the structures and approaches that might shape educational institutions into the future, drawing on lessons from COVID-19.

Guiding questions include: What have we learned? What is worth preserving? How might educational and academic structures be shifted? What does it mean to be more than a “mind” in teaching and university contexts? How do we process loss? What does an ethics of care look like post-pandemic? How might story, literature, and literary studies help us to imagine differently and enact re-visioning of education and educational structures?

We invite contributions that take up these questions through formats that engage with the re-imagining of societal and structural change this session opens up, whether critical, creative, reflective, or a combination.

13) Shakespeare in the Theatre

Moderator: David Yezzi, Professor, The Writing Seminars, Johns Hopkins University

This seminar will focus on Shakespeare’s plays as presented to audiences on stage and film, and how these interpretations have shaped our understanding of the plays. Participants might wish to explore topics related to: Restoration adaptations of the plays (e.g., Nahum Tate’s upbeat *King Lear* and William Davenant’s “alter’d” *Macbeth*); original pronunciation and “original practice”; theater criticism and dramaturgy (e.g. Kenneth Tynan, James Shapiro, Anthony B. Dawson); the director as critic (e.g., Orson Wells, Peter Brook, Arin Arbus); Shakespeare for schoolchildren; non-traditional casting; Shakespeare as opera (e.g., Thomas Adès, Benjamin Britten, John Adams); the Arden Shakespeare’s “Shakespeare in the Theatre” series focusing on influential companies and directors; particular challenges of staging; Joseph Papp’s Shakespeare in the Park; the British and American schools of acting; Shakespeare in Bollywood; Kurosawa’s Shakespeare; actors of the British “golden age” (e.g. Lawrence Olivier, Paul Scofield, Peggy Ashcroft, John Gielgud); Donmar Warehouse’s all-female Shakespeare; Shakespeare as cultural exchange. Consideration of any aspects of theatrical production and interpretation welcome.

14) *Mrs. Dalloway* in Time

Moderator: Sarah Heidt, Associate Professor of English, Kenyon

To celebrate the centenary of Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway*, this seminar will engage with the manifold ways the novel has lived in and through time. Papers may focus on the novel’s genesis through short stories and drafts, on its initial reception, or on its ongoing life in adaptations, in critical appraisals and reappraisals, in new and unexpected relevancies. Participants are also welcome to dwell within the novel’s own moments and hours, roving with it through and beyond its single June day, exploring the philosophies of time and history and the memories and futures it summons. Through a wide array of critical and creative engagements with what Woolf called this novel’s “beautiful caves behind [her] characters,” we will make contact with one of Clarissa Dalloway’s central questions: “What did it mean to her, this thing she called life?” What does it mean to us, this novel’s life? And how might we, as readers, scholars, and writers in 2025, gather around it in a way that feels (to borrow another of Mrs. Dalloway’s terms) like an offering? We

hope for a lark and a plunge, an encounter that will help launch the novel's second century of growing in and through new generations of readers.

15) United States Literature in Conversation

Moderators: Ernest Suarez, David M. O'Connell Professor of English, Catholic University and Kenneth Warren, Fairfax M. Cone Distinguished Service Professor, University of Chicago

In 1986 James Baldwin observed, "You can see that this is what is happening to me. It's why Strether goes back. In principle I could stay here (Paris) and never go back to Harlem and New York City again . . . But I can't do it . . . *Giovanni's Room* is about David (not Giovanni) in the same way *The Ambassadors* is about Strether . . . The speech I really spoke . . . is much closer to Bessie Smith than it is to Henry James. But as a writer I needed a box to put thoughts in—a model . . . and James became, in a sense, my master. It was something about point of view, something about discipline. And something about the silence in which I myself was living began to help me because I was able to go back to something in myself in that silence—the silence of living in Paris—which allowed me to write. And *Go Tell It on the Mountain* I could never have written without that silence and without James . . . James was my key."

This seminar focuses on the various ways in which works by writers from the United States have engaged works by other writers from the United States and other countries. We welcome papers that stick to one genre or mix genres, including the novel, short story, poetry, drama, song, graphic fiction, or essay, as well as adaptations of works into films or other forms.

16) American Literary and Cultural Studies at Ohio State University

Moderator: Robert Levine, Distinguished University Professor, University of Maryland-College Park

By invitation only.

Plenary Panels (by invitation only unless otherwise noted):

1) Rules for Mothers: Literary and Medical Perspectives

Moderator: Harriet Fertik, Assistant Professor of Classics, The Ohio State University

2) Literature and the Sense

Moderator: Sonia Velázquez, Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Indiana University

3) Stanley Plumly

Moderator: David Baker, Professor Emeritus, Denison University

4) TBA

Events:

1. Poetry Reading

To be announced soon.

2. *Literary Matters* Reading

Matthew Steinhafel, Editor-in-Chief, *Literary Matters*, presiding

3. Banquet, November 8th

ALSCW Mission Statement:

The Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers seeks to promote excellence in literary criticism and scholarship, and works to ensure that literature thrives in both scholarly and creative environments. We encourage the reading and writing of literature, criticism, and scholarship, as well as wide-ranging discussions among those committed to the reading and study of literary works.