

SEAN

The Society of Early Americanists Newsletter



THE SOCIETY OF EARLY
AMERICANISTS

From the SEA President

I'm excited to begin planning the 2027 biennial conference with the conference program committee, common reading initiative committee, and local host committees. The conference will take place March 18-20, 2027, at Loyola University's Water Tower campus (many thanks to Jeff Glover for his assistance in securing this space). Loyola University's Water Tower campus is located just off of Michigan Avenue, about a half a mile from the Newberry Library, and easily accessible by public transit from O'Hare and Midway airports.

The call for papers was just circulated, and I hope you'll consider submitting a proposal. The program committee welcomes individual papers on any topic related to the early Americas, and we're also encouraging fully constituted panels or roundtables.

We especially welcome panels, workshops, or roundtables related to the 2027 Common Reading, Laila Lalami's *The Moor's Account* (a fictional retelling of Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's *Relación* from the perspective of the enslaved man Estebanico).

In addition, the committee is encouraging proposals for hands-on workshops oriented around teaching and learning skills rather than around presentations or talks. These might include pedagogical practices, making (prints, textiles, ink, food, etc.) in the classroom, topics around academic freedom and mutual aid, writing about the past, etc.

As in the past, this conference will feature a set of panel streams, linked panel on a topic or set of conversations that attendees can follow across the conference. Please submit papers or panels directly to the panel stream chair. You can see panel streams and the full call for papers here: <https://www.societyofearlyamericanists.org/whats-new-announcements/call-for-proposals-society-of-early-americanists-2027-biennial-conference>.

The program committee will give priority to panels that reflect a range of institutional affiliations, career stages, and disciplinary backgrounds. All proposals should be submitted through exOrdo: <https://sea2027.exordo.com/>.

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Soldiers in Uniform (1781-1784); Jean Baptiste Antoine de Verger

Please also support the SEA travel fund with a donation to the fundraising campaign at the [site linked here](#). The SEA has seen requests for travel support grow over the past few years, as institutions cut travel funding. At the same time, our membership has shrunk and inflation has meant that the costs of hosting a conference are increasingly high. To support as many scholars as possible, we are fundraising to raise support for travel grants. Even a small donation will go a long way—if each SEA member gave \$25, we’d reach our goal of \$5000. At this writing, we are just under halfway to that goal, so I’d ask those who can donate to do so. Finally, thank you to the scholars who are sharing their time and expertise with SEA by serving on one of the conference committees:

Local Host Committee:

Madison Bastress (D’Arcy McNickle Center/Newberry Library), Melissa Adams Campbell (Northern Illinois University), Caroline Egan (Northwestern), Mar Garcia (Northeastern Illinois University), Jeff Glover (Loyola), Matthew Kruer (University of Chicago), Hayley Negrin (University of Illinois-Chicago), Eric Slaughter (University of Chicago), SJ Zhang (University of Chicago)

Common Reading Initiative Committee:

Stacey Dearing (Siena University), Cate Denial (Knox College), Keri Holt (Utah State University), Don James McLaughlin (University of Tulsa), Chloe Northrup (Tarrant County College), Ana Schwartz (University of Texas-Austin), Courtney Murray Ross (James Madison University)

Program Committee:

Ben Bascom (West Virginia University), Ajay Batra (Vanderbilt University), Christian Crouch (Bard College), Jenny Forsythe (Western Washington University), John Garcia (American Antiquarian Society), Andrea Knutson (Oakland University), David Medina (Florida Atlantic University), John Nelson (Texas Tech University), Sarah Robbins (Tufts University), Lloyd Sy (Yale University), Chris Trigg (Nanyang Technological University), Abram van Engen (Washington University-St. Louis), Maria Windell (University of Colorado-Boulder); Ex-Officio: Kirsten Silva Gruesz (University of California-Santa Cruz), Caroline Hopkins Wigginton (University of Mississippi), Rebecca M. Rosen (Murray State University)

Kelly Wisecup, SEA President
Northwestern University



From the SEA Vice-President

A learned society, or scholarly association, represents a wild and noble hope: to forge a sense of community among strangers who share a common interest or cause. Communities can’t only be imagined; they must be built and reinforced through an active *practice* of fellowship. As we enter the “off” year in SEA’s cycle of biennial in-person conferences, where such community-building brought about the founding of the Society back in 1990, the leadership of the organization continues to reflect on ways to keep the heart of that fellow-feeling pumping.

The days of robust attendance at far-flung conferences—not only at the biennial, but at the many standalone conferences and symposia that SEA once co-sponsored on off years—may well be over due to shrinking graduate programs and institutional travel budgets. We know it’s not enough to work the muscle of fellowship practice only once every two years, so what would a healthy exercise program (so to speak) look like?

Those first decades of the organization’s existence overlapped with the childhood of the internet: originally designed (according to Tim Berners-Lee, one of its key architects) as “a collaborative space where you can communicate through sharing information.” Such a concept resonated for many of us with the role of the coffeehouse in the later eighteenth century. Those local hotbeds of radical ideas from across the world eventually degenerated into—well, the familiar coffee chain with the round green logo. In the same way, the free and (usually) friendly exchanges among total strangers that characterized the early internet are now much harder to find, if not extinct. I wrote a column last year about the sad decline of the listserv in the twenty-first century: the early Americanist listserv EARAM was, in its heyday, as much a virtual coffeehouse as it was a bulletin board for announcements.

But for every physical or virtual space that fades from relevance or gets encroached upon by some corporate entity that replaces joy with monetization, another arises to take its place. A mere decade ago, videoconferencing was expensive, unreliable, and limited in scope (remember Skype?). The global pandemic unleashed by Covid-19 transformed every student and teacher, ready or not, into a user of videoconference technologies that have thankfully become more reliable and, for most of us, institutionally subsidized.

Ever since the 2021 SEA Biennial was forced to move to the virtual space, our conference and advisory committees have wrestled with finding the right balance between different modes of practicing community fellowship. There's no permanent solution; the right formula keeps changing along with the material conditions of our embodied and virtual lives.

It's clear, though, that SEA's membership wants and needs a variety of options by which to connect with one another in intellectual exchange, support, and fellowship. A fitness coach would point out that we're more likely to show up for a workout if we have choices: the stationary bike and the cruiser ride on a sunny day both have their appeal, and their place.

I write this a few months after SEA's first Virtual Symposium on November 14, 2025, and in advance of our second one on April 3, 2026, sponsored by the committee on Scholarly Engagement and Access: SEA-within-SEA. (See page 5 of this newsletter for more information about this forthcoming event.) Over seventy people turned out via Zoom for the November gathering: "Early American Literatures for 2026: Teaching, Thinking, Thriving." Seven outstanding presenters from a range of academic institutions and career stages gave tight, well-planned "flash talks" of five minutes each, complete with legible slides and links for the chat.

Zubida Jalazai and Sarah Ruffing Robbins drew parallels between the historical contexts we study and conditions in the U.S. today; Robbins's plea for cultivating "humanistic empathy through shared diasporic experience" set the tone.

Allyson LaForge turned to Indigenous values of reciprocity to urge us to let students lead their own discussions. Samuel Jacob's description of the early national "de-Russification" of John Paul Jones made us think about contemporary nativism, while Chris Bates's concept of "dendrocapitalism" drew attention to historical through-lines of ecological extraction.

DeLisa D. Hawkes cited John Marrant to link the religious and the political senses of "conviction," and in closing, Joanna Brooks brought the presentations full circle: returning to Jalazai's points about sharing educational agency.

Our students belong to a generation that wants to build, Brooks enthused: let's conjoin critique with community-making side by side with them. The spirited dialogue that followed sounded just like my Platonic ideal of coffee-house debate and I look forward to more of the same.

A postscript: while composing this I typed "what beverages were served at eighteenth-century coffeehouses?" into a Google search bar. As is now typical, I was served its Gemini AI answer first in a set of bullet points. Most of the response was as expected: coffee, tea, chocolate with spices, and specialty drinks. But this sentence gave me pause: "Some establishments offered unique items like 'content' (a mixture of milk and eggs) or sage tea." I knew of milk punch, eggnog, and other eighteenth-century beverages made with dairy products, but I'd never heard "content" used in this sense.

Chastising my ignorance, I logged into the *OED* (another resource that is sadly only free to the institutionally privileged) and perused all the obsolete meanings of "content" as a noun. Reader: that sense *does not exist*. I reproduced my question on a different browser, and the milk-and-eggs drink by that name disappeared; a competing chatbot said nothing about it either. Call it hallucination or confabulation, this confident AI glitch illustrates the reason I keep defending the transmission of ideas between human and human, no matter what the modality of that exchange.

Kirsten Silva Gruesz, SEA Vice-President
University of California, Santa Cruz

From the SEA Executive Coordinator

I write this, my first SEAN column as Executive Coordinator, in the aftermath of an historic winter storm that was exceptionally devastating to my small university town and the surrounding corner of our state of Mississippi. Through the dark early morning hours at the peak of a storm that combined snow, sleet, and lightning, our trees, crusted and weighed down by ice and buffeted by winds, crashed around us. In the deep silence of the night, branches cracked and tumbled and thundered as they fell. They collapsed roofs and power lines. All we could do in our homes was wait alone: for impact, for dawn, for the end, whatever it might be. Dawn did come, as did reminders that we weren't alone in this. Locals began helping each other, including stranded students. Help arrived from nearby regions and far away states. As of now, it's been a week and electricity and water remain out for much of my county, but we've all begun recovering together.

I found myself jokingly remarking at various moments that I'm living like an early American, especially when sifting through the remnants of my pantry to assemble a meal for my family or reading a paperback by candlelight, turning pages with numbed fingers.

Without light or internet, there isn't much to do after dark. Such moments remind me that early Americans often made do with what they had and their winter nights were surely long, especially for those facing violent conflict, sickness, and scarcity.

So perhaps there are early American lessons in this season of crisis, for me and for others. My town's ice storm may be unique to this part of Mississippi, yet I don't know of anyone who doesn't feel as if a watershed is upon them, their universities, their profession, or their community. It seems that nowadays we all feel at times like we are waiting powerless in the dark. Maybe early American literatures and cultures can give us ideas about how to last through the night and how to restore and build anew come dawn.

One lesson is simply patience. Crisis feels long when we're in its midst, and we want to repair quickly what's broken so we can have peace and security. But rebuilding is slow. Indigenous and Black Americans have spent centuries surviving and resisting settler colonialism and chattel slavery as well as revitalizing and generating nations, cultures, and kinships. European colonists themselves spent years constructing physical and political infrastructure.

Our textbooks helpfully identify sub-periods (even as we know early American chronologies have been imposed, at times awkwardly, by the present), but none of these eras are brief. Early Americans knew forming community takes time. And like early Americans, we may never see the full fruits of our efforts to survive and resist crisis.

Yet we already know how to be patient, as education and research are also deliberate and incremental, as is comprehending the strangeness and power of early American literatures.

Another lesson is to help each other and to ask for help. As we first withstand and then recover from crisis, there will be those whose needs are more pressing, and we should collectively help them first. Those who need most help are often those without direct access to help otherwise.

I think of the many early American petitions where enslaved and bound servants, women without rights, and the poor and aged pled for relief from those with more might and resources. I think of the ways they came together as collectives to make visible their needs. I'm therefore inspired by the mutual aid efforts being organized by our Scholarly Access and Engagement Committee.

They are planning their first virtual event for later this spring. I am proud to see our members plumb their various storehouses to use what they have to offer mentorship, contribute to the travel fund, or do one of the many other creative and sustaining acts of service for our fellows.

A third lesson is to take time to mourn. Early Americans were accustomed to loss, and rather than becoming inured to it, they wrote elegies and memorializations.

They knew they had to acknowledge grief. I think of Anne Bradstreet's elegies for her grandchildren. Each lyric distinctively and beautifully remembers and honors a particular child, a particular relationship, because each loss was unique. She employed her art for them and for herself and her kin. She understood grieving was as necessary a practice as any other during calamity.

A final lesson is to tell good stories. Our field, especially in recent decades, has worked determinedly to understand early American narratives as an array of, by turns, moving, inspiring, self-serving, and destructive fictions. Like us, early Americans told and retold stories for themselves—to help them understand what had happened, to come together, to define who they wanted to be.

We still read their stories, and so we know stories are also for the future. We should therefore be sure to tell our own enduring stories, ones that will be repositories of wisdom while also being true and honest about when and how we've struggled. What knowledge do we want to remember and narrate for future generations of scholars who may experience versions of current crises?

Early Americans were diverse and complicated. They did and believed many things that are far from admirable. They were often intolerant and they could be violent and destructive.

But they were also humans who celebrated, loved, prayed, and sang while they built and rebuilt their communities. They knew how to survive a dark night amidst storm and without power. And we do too.

Caroline Wigginton, SEA Executive Coordinator
University of Mississippi

SEA Votes on Amendments

On November 14, 2025, the SEA first held a virtual symposium that featured several five minute “flash talks” to present a variety of diverse, creative lessons, questions and ideas that addressed the challenges of studying and teaching early America in 2026.

The symposium was followed by a virtual business meeting where several proposals were discussed and debated. The proposals included the following:

- 1) Proposal to change all language in the SEA constitution and bylaws referring to the diversity, equity, and inclusion officer and committee to the Scholarly Access and Engagement officer and committee.
- 2) Proposal to change language in the SEA constitution and bylaws to reflect the Junior Scholars Caucus name change, approved by that caucus in October 2025. All references to the “Junior Scholars Caucus (JSC)” in the SEA government documents will be changed to “Emerging Scholars Caucus (ESC)” in order to reflect this change.
- 3) Proposal to amend Constitution section VI. Election of Officers to include the following sentence: “In the event that balloting results in a tie the Council of Officers, comprised of the combined Executive and Advisory Committees, will resolve the tie.”

The vote was then conducted by electronic ballot with the voting closing on December 1, 2025. The membership voted as follows:

- 1) Proposal to change the name of the SEA Diversity Equity and Inclusion committee passed, 48-5.
- 2) Proposal to change the language referring to the Junior Scholars Caucus to reflect that caucus’s recent name change and revised leadership structure passed, 55-0.
- 3) Proposal to add to the constitution to deal with an election tie passed, 55-0.



SEAC Online Discussion: Dean Spade's *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (And The Next)*

Please join the Scholarly Engagement and Access Committee (SEAC) on April 3 at 1:30 EST, 12:30 CST, for an online discussion of Dean Spade's *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (And The Next)*. Spade’s book examines the several crises people have been faced with around the world, from climate change to Covid-19, from systemic gender violence to inhumane immigration policies.

Spade maintains that when the government fails us, or even when it perpetuates the crises, the people must support each other through grassroots movements that result in larger social change. Spade offers concrete approaches and tools for organization, addressing conflict, and avoiding burnout.

During our meeting, we will discuss selections from the book as a starting point for how our Society might incorporate mutual aid principles and practices as we chart ways forward.

Discussion topics will include community development, contributing resources in kind, and developing new sources of support for academic projects. It is recommended that you read the book in full; however, two selections from the text have been sent via email through the SEA listserv: Chapter 1 and a selection from Chapter 5. Should you wish to purchase the book, please note that the Verso website is only taking preorders for a forthcoming new edition, but the previous edition we are working from is available from other sellers.



Cover of Spade’s book,
Mutual Aid

A Message from the Emerging Scholars Caucus

Greetings from the newly renamed Emerging Scholars Caucus (ESC)! Formerly known as the Junior Scholars Caucus, we officially became the ESC following a caucus- and society-wide vote this past fall.

Our new title reflects what our caucus, founded circa 2015, has become for early career scholars and graduate students alike: that is, a space that fosters community, shares research and teaching resources, hosts professionalization events, and facilitates connections across the field of early American studies through our mentorship program.

To reflect who we are and what we do, we will continue developing the ESC this spring by building our the caucus' webpage on the Society of Early Americanists website and migrating our email correspondence to an account with our new namesake. Stay tuned for more updates!

In addition to our name change, the ESC also welcomed Vice Chair Abigail Rawleigh for the 2025-2027 term. Abby received her PhD from the University of Notre Dame in 2024 and has been a visiting lecturer in the Department of English at Indiana University since then.

Abby's work studies the intersection of religion and literature in the Anglophone Atlantic with a particular emphasis on devotional practices and literatures. Her current book project focuses on apocalypse in seventeenth-century settler colonial poetry. The ESC has been a valuable community for Abby as both a graduate student and early career scholar, and she is excited to support emerging scholars in the caucus.

Since assuming her role, Abby has established the ESC's weekly writing group to provide a virtual space for caucus members to work in community. At these two-hour Zoom meetings, we set writing goals, work independently, and update each other on our progress.

Alongside these caucus developments the ESC continues to serve its members with semesterly workshops and roundtables. Similar to the professionalization events of years past, we hosted a virtual roundtable on navigating the academic job market in September 2025.

Caucus members Jacob Myers and Courtney Murray Ross talked about their recent experiences on the job market and long-time SEA member Meredith Neumann responded with insight from the perspective of search committees before fielding questions from the audience. Later this spring, we are planning an event centered on pedagogy.

If you are an SEA member and identify as an emerging scholar, I welcome you to join ESC by filling out [this 5-question intake form](#).

Lauren Santoru, Chair, Emerging Scholars Caucus
University of Alabama



American Antiquarian Society Announces Early American Summer Seminars

This summer, the American Antiquarian Society is offering two early American themed seminars open to applications.

“Paper Relations: Histories and Futures of Indigenous Print Cultures” will be offered between June 21-26 and co-taught by Kelly Wisecup and Kathryn Walkiewicz. This seminar will focus on indigenous peoples use of print and the book, and indigenous studies in relationship to the history of book scholarship. Specific topics may include but are not limited to environmental histories of the book, periodical networks, and Indigenous language revitalization. For more information and application information, visit [here](#).

The 2026 Center for Historic American Visual Culture will host “Ecology and Empire,” under the leadership of Maggie M. Cao, and will host guest speakers Stacy Kamehiro and Alan Braddock, with more being announced soon. The seminar will focus on the practices of how seeing, hearing, and managing the natural world ensured hierarchies of race, gender, and labor in the nineteenth century. Themes may include the visual and material culture of a variety of subjects including but not limited to scientific expedition, natural history, and conservation. For more information and application information, visit [here](#).

How did you become interested in studying early American literature?

It was pure chance. After grad school, I came across James Cooper's epic book, *Tenacious of their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts*, and found I was fascinated by the Puritans. It was also through Jeff Cooper that I joined New England's Hidden Histories (NEHH), a digital history project hosted by the Congregational Library & Archives, in 2013. Jeff was the director, and invited me in.

I've been transcribing church records from the 17th through the 19th centuries for over a decade now, and it has completely changed my view of many fields—Puritan studies, Early America, religion, slavery, colonization, sex and gender ... the list goes on. These are tens of thousands of pages of records that have been lost for centuries, and they are bursting with primary-source data on every aspect of life in Woodland New England during colonization and beyond. Without doubt, they are the most important new source in our fields, and I will be studying them forever.

What are you currently working on?

I have a book coming out on September 30, 2025, on Indigenous and English evolutions of Congregationalism—long-described as “the religion of the Puritans”—from the aftermath of King Philip's War through the First Great Awakening, particularly the Halfway Covenant, which owes its survival in large part to Indigenous use.

This work moves Indigenous Congregationalism from what scholars describe as a sheer survivance measure, or a “creole” practice, to a central role in the durability and meaningfulness of that denomination in Woodland New England.

This is all the result of my years reading and transcribing Congregational church records with NEHH. I'm currently working on a database detailing this process in one town, Hassanamesit/Grafton, Massachusetts Bay Colony, across the turn of the 18th century, to test my theory that people who became church members through this innovative practice experienced a lasting connection that they handed down to their children. [Note: Lori's book is *Gathered into a Church: Indigenous-English Congregationalism in Woodland New England* (UMass Press).]

Who is your favorite early American writer, or what is your favorite early American text, and why?

I resist calling historical documents “literature,” because they were not consciously written to be interpreted as literature, but what comes the closest to bridging that gap for me are the records minister Thomas Shepard made of his conversations with English women in the church at Pequotette/Cambridge in the Massachusetts Bay Colony from 1638 to 1649 (when he died).

This is the topic of my first book, *Records of Trial from Thomas Shepard's Church in Cambridge, 1638-1649: Heroic Souls*. These women told their stories of spiritual seeking with fascinating details about their intimate lives in England and Woodland New England. What's amazing to me is how strong and confident their voices are—they believed 100% in the importance of their own spiritual journeys, their questions and their answers. And, in an anomaly that really astounds, out of around 64 narratives, I'd say in 60 of them you cannot tell whether the narrator is male or female. There was no meaning in that identity before God. Their stories are very important.

Lori-Rogers Stokes in an independent scholar.

Read the rest of the interview [here](#).



Lori Rogers-Stokes

How did you become interested in studying early American literature?

I began my doctoral program with an interest in twentieth-century transatlantic fiction and the history of science. However, in my second year, while feeling as if maybe grad school was a mistake, I took a seminar in early American Native literatures with Joanna Brooks. Her teaching as well as the literature and the avenues for meaningful research were energizing. As a result, I stayed to complete my degree, changing my focus to early American literatures.

Who is your favorite early American writer, or what is your favorite early American text, and why?

I don't have favorites (just ask my children!), but I do have books I love to read, study, and teach. Hannah Webster Foster's *The Coquette* and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* are fantastic in the classroom and remain relevant to contemporary politics and culture.

I find Samson Occom's writings endlessly rich and nuanced, grounded as they are in Mohegan knowledge and kinship as well as Christian exegetical practice and his own wisdom as a community organizer and family man. One of the best things about being an early Americanist is that its literatures and peoples continue to surprise; there's always more to read and learn.



Caroline Wigginton

What are you currently working on?

Birgit Brander Rasmussen and I have been working on an edition of Mary Rowlandson's captivity narrative for Broadview for a while, and we're nearing completion. We wanted an edition from the perspective of scholars of literature, Native studies, and gender studies. It will be exciting and rewarding to see our edition in the world and also to teach with it. I also have a several essays in progress, all loosely cohering around ideas of form in earlier Indigenous literatures and art. I have stacks of books on my desk, each related to a work-in-progress.

What is something you are reading right now (EAL related or otherwise) that inspires you, either personally or professionally?

I've just started reading my friend Sarah Mesle's *Reasons & Feelings: Writing for the Humanities Now* (University of Chicago Press). It's a timely book that begins by asking us why we write and explores how to find personal meaning and purpose in that practice. I'm also generally a voracious and indiscriminate reader, especially of fiction. For me, reading is a continual source of curiosity, empathy, and joy.

Is there a scholar in the field who inspires you, and why?

So many scholars inspire me, from my own mentors to those whose scholarship I read and cite to the emerging scholars who enter academia with bravery and creativity. The first name that came to mind, though, was Annette Kolodny. She wrote some of the first early Americanist scholarship that I read, back when I was an undergrad. It stuck with me, even when I thought I would never read any more early American literature or early Americanist scholarship. Then, years later while I was an assistant professor, I was on a conference panel with her. Though experiencing profoundly debilitating effects from many years of rheumatoid arthritis that restricted her mobility and speech, Professor Kolodny was still researching and writing and was doing so with boldness and enthusiasm. She was not only brilliant but generous and interested in everyone and everything around her. She passed away in 2019, but her career, scholarship, and life continue to inspire me.

[Also see interview [here](#).]

*Teaching Early America:
Reading with Indigenous Material Culture*

My teaching strategy, “Reading with Indigenous Material Culture,” presented a method for closely reading Native-made belongings (the term I use to replace “objects”) in the classroom. I used a specific piece of quillwork on birch-bark: a model canoe crafted by Odawa leader Margaret Blackbird Boyd in 1876 for U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant (Field Museum 256290).

This quilled canoe offers students the opportunity to closely engage with a belonging crafted by a *mindimooyenh*, or female elder, which translates to “one who holds things together” (see Brenda Child, *Holding Our World Together: Ojibwe Women and the Survival of Community*).

Students came to class prepared; they watched a video presentation by Odawa archivist Eric Hemenway about Boyd’s family and completed a reading by scholar Daniel Ratus that introduced specific methods for reading and analyzing Boyd’s quillwork.

After a class-wide discussion of the historical contexts of the nineteenth century in northern Michigan, particularly the settler colonial land theft Boyd was protesting, I passed around a copy of Boyd’s letter to Grant that she wrote on January 15, 1877, after returning home from her short and dismissive meeting in the capital (National Archives).

The students transcribed and read this letter out loud as a group, focusing on it as a form of epistolary activism and Anishinaabe diplomatic practice. We then turned to Boyd’s canoe and applied these concepts to our analysis of her quillwork.

Using the canoe in the classroom is particularly exciting because of its [recent rediscovery at the Field Museum](#) and loan to the traveling *Gaawii Eta-Go Aawizinoo Gaawiye Mkakoons / It’s Not Just a Quill Box* exhibit at the Harbor Springs Area Historical Society in northern Michigan.

In her letter, Boyd described these Odawa homelands as “living Lands.” The students connected the vibrant flower and bird patterns on the canoe to Boyd’s demand that Grant and the government uphold Odawa rights to these living Lands, which had been guaranteed in multiple treaties.

Students also analyzed Boyd’s placement of two birds at the center of the model as an illustration of Boyd’s meeting with Grant; the birds’ complementary patterns, similar sizes, and face-to-face interaction represented Boyd as equal to Grant.

Because the canoe was intended as a diplomatic gift, this meeting of the birds seemed to illustrate the desired outcome of this meeting – a reciprocal exchange in which Grant met the Odawa’s requests for land protection.



Harbor Springs Area Historical Society

This exercise demonstrates how Indigenous material culture can and should be brought into the classroom as tools for close reading and analysis. Belongings like these provide new perspectives on early American literature.

Allyson LaForge
Abbott Lowell Cummings Postdoctoral Fellow in
American Material Culture

I've twice taught a lower-division introduction-to-literature course with a theme of "Finding Home: Diasporas." I begin with the Black Atlantic, using Phillis Wheatley's poetry and biography as an initial entry point for undergraduates who, typically, plan majors outside of my own college of liberal arts. Indeed, in offerings of the class in 2023 and 2025, respectively, my enrollments (set at under 20 due to its "Honors" designation) yielded only one potential liberal arts major in 2023, two in 2025. More specifically, I can point to the majority of the students for this course intending to major in business, engineering, and pre-med fields.

The closing project for the course is a mini-portfolio. One of the items students prepare for that collection is a "re-reading" reflection, which asks them to select excerpts from two course texts, to comment on each in relation to the course theme of diasporas, and then to draw connections between their two chosen re-readings. Interestingly, a majority of the students in this semester's class selected *My Name is Phillis Wheatley* as one of their assigned texts to revisit. Their chosen excerpts ranged widely from this biography's many striking scenes, including episodes Cooper sets (via a "critical fabulation" approach) in Wheatley's pre-capture time in Africa and her experience of the Middle Passage, as well as sections of the biography depicting Wheatley's journey to England and her marriage to John Peters.

Anecdotally, throughout the term students often referenced Wheatley poems we'd read together—such as the author's address to the privileged learners at Harvard/Cambridge, MA, during her day. That poem became a frequent point of connection for discussions of race-, class-, and gender-based differences in opportunities and constraints, a recurring course theme. It resonated in nuanced ways, students observed, with several lyric responses to Wheatley's life and work that we also discussed (such as Eve Ewing's "1773" and excerpts from drea brown's *dear girl: a reckoning collection*) and had clearly made a deep impression. Intertextual reading, in other words, was a vital aspect of our learning.

But one element in the staying power of Wheatley—and Cooper's biography of her—throughout the course resided in early writing projects for the class and how they encouraged students' efforts to engage with the eighteenth-century poet in relational terms. To consider how, at about 19 when her book of poetry appeared, she was around the same age as members of the class themselves, who were all engaged with various kinds of moving experiences themselves.

While we were reading *My Name is Phillis Wheatley* and texts by the poet herself, students were also preparing their first writing project: to create a memoir of their own memo-

experience. Perhaps predictably, some students wrote about their move from home to college. But several in the class (both times I've taught it so far) were international students who tapped into a more cross-cultural dynamic of moving to a university far from their native culture. Others delved into family histories of migration, sometimes informed by the very first time they had discussed these details with parents or grandparents.

In-class workshoping of drafts highlighted the distinct differences between enforced capture and enslavement experienced by Wheatley versus making a choice, say, to attend college in region far from one's home. But some students' stories for this project—while certainly not as harrowing as Wheatley's—did offer up brave accounts of tragic familial separations grounded in economic challenges, or dramatic experiences of cross-national migration. When we began this writing project, I stressed that every submission would be uploaded to a shared online space, where all students would read their classmates' texts and choose two to spotlight, in informal feedback writing, for effective craft. Even with this "fair warning," many class members wrote about deeply personal experiences—showing a level of trust in our community that, in turn, helped enable critical engagement with challenging topics in our readings, such as Wheatley's authorship as simultaneously enabled and constrained by her enslavers, or, later in the course, the impact of Removals on cultural sovereignty among Native communities, the longstanding effects of WWII incarceration on Japanese Americans, and the trauma of separating families when some crossed from Mexico to farm work as braceros.

Beginning with an accessible biography of Wheatley, setting that text in dialogue with related readings, and, in turn, positioning students' own writings as significant resources for learning, all contributed to both individual students' learning and the development of a trusting classroom community. Thank you, Afua Cooper, for your skilled narrative. And thanks also to Wheatley, whose compelling life experiences and poetry continue to draw appreciative learning.

Sarah Ruffing Robbins
Texas Christian University

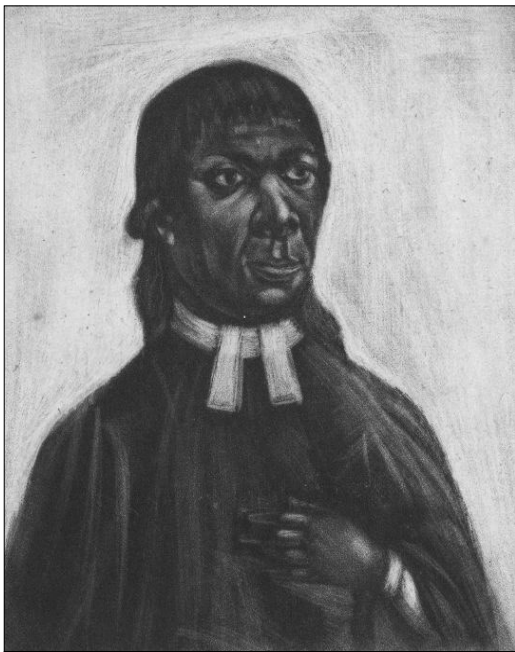
QR Codes for: Interview or Memoir Project, In-Class Activities, and Cooper Biography Questions.



*Teaching Early America:
John Marrant's Narrative*

John Marrant's 1785 *Narrative* is a text that should be revisited in the 2026 classroom considering how today's political landscape is marred by politicization, which hinders communication and cooperation across the political spectrum. His text provides an opportunity for students to critically consider how to co-exist as many nations of many beliefs. Marrant characterizes his religious journey and time spent among the Cherokee as critical events contributing to his call for "kingdoms of the world" to strip themselves of all supposedly inherent difference and to become "kingdoms of our God and of his Christ."

He ventures into the woods and speaks aloud to God, prompting a Cherokee hunter to overhear him and think that he is talking to himself. The hunter asks Marrant who he is talking to, to which he answers, "to my Lord Jesus [who can] not be seen with bodily eyes" (i). He tells the hunter that the Lord is responsible for having kept him safe from the woods' beasts. The hunter is astonished by the power of this man Marrant calls Jesus and shows him various survival tactics while teaching him the Cherokee language.



Portrait of John Marrant

Marrant lives with the Cherokee for an extended time and commits his religious service to converting citizens of other tribes. He eventually is adopted by the tribe and decides to return to his family. However, they do not recognize him as he has become Cherokee (ii).

The text's final scenes recall his religious career once he has returned to "white civilization" and his service as a British loyalist. He provides commentary addressing Native peoples' right to defend themselves and their worldviews and calls on readers to understand belonging as dictated not by man but by the nation of the Kingdom of God. He says, "I have now only to entreat the earnest prayers of all my kind Christian friends [that] strangers may hear of and run to Christ; that Indian tribes may stretch out their hands to God; that the black nations may be made white in the blood of the Lamb [the] kingdoms of the world are to become the kingdoms of our God" (iii).

Without question, Marrant echoes a colonialist tone which amplifies the spread of Christianity. However, his references to color can be particularly useful for students given they work to symbolize morality and focus on the content and character of the soul. "Black nations" and "white blood" do not refer to race in the way students might otherwise suspect. Rather, Marrant's mention of blood and color anticipates the nineteenth-century's obsession with racial purity and racialized understandings of blood related to good and evil, which underscores the nation's transition to crafting a narrative of belonging based on race and racialized appearances.

Marrant's emphasis on how he became Cherokee – by learning the language, adopting the dress, and being embedded within their cultural practices – appreciates difference of perspective regarding how individuals should relate to one another based on their own communities' views and practices and not by an external agent. Marrant's text asks students to appreciate freedom of thought, relation, and belonging that are needed more than ever as we turn the page to 2026.

i. John Marrant, *A narrative of the Lord's wonderful dealings with John Marrant, a black [microform] : (now going to preach the Gospel in Nova-Scotia), born in New-York, in North America*, [Internet Archive](#), Archived 17 November 2009, 19.

ii. *Ibid.*, 33.

iii. *Ibid.*, 38.

DeLisa D. Hawkes
College of William and Mary

*Teaching Early America:
A Divided America and the Sophomore Literature Survey*

In Trump's second term, teaching a sophomore American literature survey feels both urgent and unsettling. The texts no longer read as a familiar national tradition but as encounters with a distant people whose assumptions about shared values feel precarious. How, students asked, did early America shape today's political standoffs?

To begin answering this, the course opened with George Packer's 2021 *Atlantic* essay, "[How America Fractured Into Four Parts](#)." Packer's schema—Free America, Smart America, Real America, and Just America—traces the long and short historical arcs that have produced the present divides.

Packer argues that until the 20th century, Democrats and Republicans largely operated within two recognizable national narratives: "The Republicans spoke for those who wanted to get ahead, and the Democrats spoke for those who wanted a fair shake" (66). While that world was less diverse or tolerant it featured more economic equality and political cooperation (66). By the 21st century, however, these had splintered into four competing stories that "overlap, morph into one another, attract and repel one another" (66). Understanding these narratives requires placing it in relation to the others.

The most historically dominant is Free America, represented in the late 20th century by Ronald Reagan. Though initially contested among traditionalists, anticommunists, and libertarians, the libertarian thread ultimately prevailed. Free America emphasizes personal freedom, meritocracy, and free-market capitalism, often accompanied by racialized and class-inflected ideas about "those people" who refuse to help themselves. Freedom here means freedom from government.

Smart America also revolves around elites, but specifically the educated elite who support market competition alongside regulatory mechanisms that allow more people a "fair shake." Smart America is cosmopolitan and multicultural rather than patriotic in the Free America mold. Real America and Just America emerge as later iterations of Free and Smart Americas. Real America is grounded in a white, Christian, working-class identity marked by cultural conservatism, anti-intellectualism, and populism expressed in the Tea Party and MAGA movements. Just America arises through contemporary social-justice activism, foregrounding systemic inequality and identity-based critique, and often leaning toward moral absolutism.

Within this framework, the class asked where John Winthrop fits. He inhabited a very different political world, something palpable to students reading him for the first time. Yet his "city upon a hill" warning—that failure would make the community "a story and a by-word through the world"—is repeatedly invoked across contemporary narratives. Reagan famously reframed it as a "shining city," but JFK and Barack Obama also used it to promote communal spirit and renewed national leadership. Their versions reflect elements of Free and Smart America, though they omit Winthrop's demand for conformity within a divinely ordered hierarchy: "some must be rich and some poor."

Reading Winthrop through Packer's schema proved imperfect but productive. He shares the traditionalism of an older Free America, the Educated Elitism of Smart America, the Christianity and communal purity of Real America (though on a more global stage) and the call for an accounting and maintaining of moral principles of Just America. Winthrop's liberty, rooted in divine hierarchy and communal conformity through "one Body in Christ" is far from these modern interpretations. It opened space to place other figures and texts along these narratives. Overall, this approach re-invigorated students' investment in the study of American literature as they saw themselves in relation to these competing worlds.

Zubeda Jalalzai
Rhode Island College



Portrait of John Winthrop

*Early American Historical Sites
Cooperstown and 'Dendrocapitalism'*

I am writing this contribution in the aftermath of the disposition of Venezuela's president Maduro by US forces, an operation plainly motivated by a desire to gain access to Venezuelan oil. This is petrocapi-talism on a geopolitical scale. In a recent flash talk for the SEA, I proposed that to better understand and critique such manifestations of contemporary petrocapi-talism, an understanding of its precursor, an energy and resource regime I term "dendrocapitalism," is imperative.

Referring to a political economy of wood that defined the early American period, dendrocapitalism provided the material substrate for the United States's transformation into a global superpower. As such, I argue that early American literature is an archive of dendrocapitalism abundant with research potential and that an ideal site to realize this potential is Cooperstown, NY, noted for being the home of the baseball hall of fame.

The town's potential for research rests on the fact that its development was immortalized in text by land speculator William Cooper in his *Guide in the Wilderness* (1811), which was followed in time by his son's and granddaughter's own works.



Cooperstown, New York

Taken alongside William's history-cum-manual for future settlement, James Fenimore Cooper's entertaining novel *The Pioneers* (1823) and Susan Fenimore Cooper's *Rural Hours* (1850) provide a triptych of texts that delineate dendrocapitalism's vicissitudes across the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, with the latter providing a rich and delicate natural history of the area; a valuable counterpoint to her male predecessors' works.

However, as arguably the text most illustrative of the processes and forces driving dendrocapitalism, it is worth pausing over James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pioneers*. Set in 1793, the novel provides a temporal condensation of dendrocapitalism's timeline, from the dispossession of Indigenous Americans, to the land speculation that followed the Revolutionary War, to the rapid immigration of European settlers into the frontier, all of which relied on the rapid deforestation of the forest for resources, capital, and fuel.

Throughout the novel, Cooper describes this transformation at great length, detailing the production of potash, maple-sugar, firewood, timber buildings, and the labor required to obtain them. However, through his characters, he also engages with debates about the conservation of the forest and the dangers of human-caused disasters such as forest fires, creating a text rich with classroom potential given its connections to present-day climate discussions.

Beyond Cooperstown, though, early-America's dendrocapitalist archive is full of fresh avenues for investigation, from texts such as Adriaen van der Donck's *A Description of New Netherland*, to the work of John Smith, to the accounts of wood thefts by settlers written by Indigenous authors including William Apess and Samson Occom, to the periodicals of Lydia Maria Child, right up to twenty-first century fictionalizations of early America's relationship with wood, most notably Annie Proulx's *Barkskins* and Richard Powers's *The Overstory*.

Within such diverse works, I hope that scholars and students alike can find grist for the dendrocapitalist mill and see its value in generating vital social, political and ecological reflection.

Chris Bates
University of Sussex

*The following is from an interview with Jonathan Senchyne, creator of “The Wheatley Census,” conducted by Kaitlin Tonti. “The Wheatley Census” is a searchable database that documents all surviving copies of all editions of Phillis Wheatley’s *Poems on Various Subjects Religious and Moral*, which were published between 1773 and 1909. The database is available [here](#).

If you know of a copy that has not been documented by “The Wheatley Census,” you can contribute data or report a new copy [here](#).

What inspired this project?

In 2022 and 2023, Bridget Fielder and I were putting together a special collections exhibit here at UW-Madison for the 250th anniversary of the publication of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, working a lot with our collections that we have here. We have at least six or seven different editions, including the first edition. But as part of that exhibit work, a lot of what we were doing was tracing the spread of Wheatley's influence and her work through different publication contexts, both through the reprinting of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral* and publication of her poems in other contexts, like periodicals, and then even beyond that in textbooks in the 20th century or anthologies in the 20th century, and Black periodicals publications in the 19th and 20th century.

thought to myself, boy, it would be great to have a modern complete bibliography of this work. There are earlier bibliographies but they are not necessarily complete because of what was available to those researchers at the time when they were doing those projects and what was known to them. Also, the bibliographies that existed focused on just publication events.

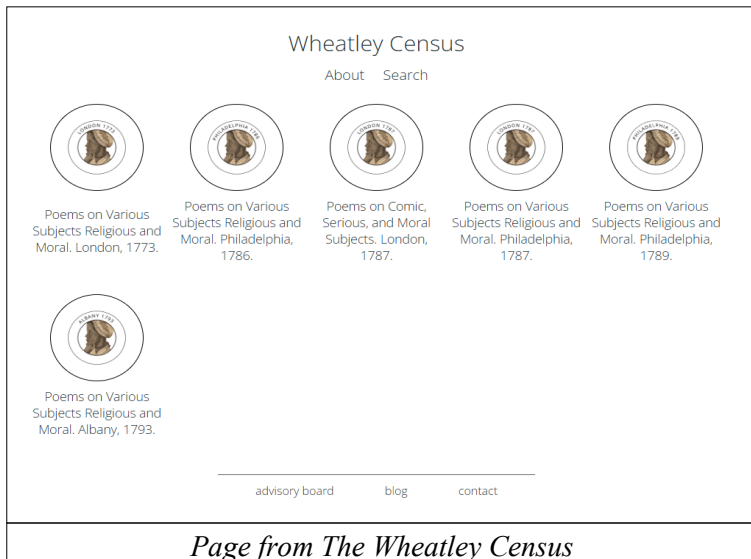
One of the things that I was doing when putting the exhibit together was thinking, “You know, if other people wanted to do this, how would they find out like what’s on their campus or what’s nearby or what’s within their state library system?” I was wishing that there was something like the Shakespeare Census, which I knew from my own teaching and being in the bibliographical world does a comprehensive, enumerative bibliography of every surviving copy of every edition.

At the same time, Meredith McGill and Jacqueline Goldsby published a really important article in PBSA on black bibliography and the work of putting the exhibit together and doing all this work made me feel their argument firsthand. And I just got to thinking, well, this is a thing that is accomplishable. And I've already done some of the spade work of trying to figure this out for our own exhibit and my own work with curators here at UW, trying to build around our existing Wheatley collections. And so we set to work to do it.

What has been the most difficult or complicated aspect of this project so far?

One of the nice things about my particular setting institutionally is that I teach in a library school. I teach book history and print culture within a library or an information school setting. And so often my students are very interested in these kinds of projects or actively working on them, or my students are learning and working and innovating in things like catalogs and digital open access resources. Some of the initial inertia is just easier to overcome because of the setting that I'm in.

One of the interesting challenges about getting started was overcoming ideas about existing data. In my earliest conversations about this with colleagues, their initial impetus or advice was, all of this data already exists. It’s in WorldCat. Why don't you just pull all the data from WorldCat? All you’re really doing is taking existing information and putting it in a new database or website. But from my own experience as a researcher and co-curator of this exhibit, I knew that WorldCat, because of the way it’s been designed for discovery in an undergraduate setting, often



Page from *The Wheatley Census*

And so, a lot of what we were doing was searching and creating our own lists of places where her work appeared or where she was discussed. As I got to doing that, especially when trying to track down different editions of *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, I just

Libraries just often don't have the resources to do very detailed item level description. Some do, and that's great when they do, but often when things are cataloged they're pulling centralized catalog records of already existing copies. And so another thing that you'll see across the first editions, for example, is that around the United States there will be a lot of records that have a provenance attribution to Ann Poulter. And certainly one copy out there does have that provenance info in it. But because other institutions have pulled that central catalog record, they've repeated that data for their own copies, which is inaccurate.

Part of what the census is trying to do is create original, accurate item level description through eventually turning next to collaborating with people at their own institutions or trying to work with faculty and librarians at institutions that have copies to build into their classes description activities. Bibliographical investigation can add to the census and bring items into the active work of census making to create richer item level data that the economics of library cataloging doesn't often allow.

I really want to start getting at what's unique about individual copies too. And not just the first edition but all of them; there are 17 editions so far between 1773 and 1909. And I'm considering extending it because there's another significant edition in 1930, but that's a down-the-road collection. I'm hoping to use the census as a way of getting more people involved in creating item-level specific information, knowledge, research, and teaching about what's going on at the individual item level, whether that's provenance or marginalia, institutional history, collecting history, whatever can be found. And I'm hoping that this will spur on more item level research.

What else do you think can be done with the census? Where do you see it going from here?

One of the things that we've done in the initial 1.0 release is that every record where we have any provenance information includes metadata like the gender and time periods of previous owners. One of the things that you can do is search by women owners in the 18th century or women owners in the 19th century. What this has suggested to me, just putting the data together, is that a lot of first owners of the first 1773 edition were white evangelical teenage girls. That makes sense because the publication was supported by the Countess of Dartmouth, and the enslaver Wheatleys were part of a transatlantic evangelical community.

That transatlantic evangelical community moved through the enslaver Wheatleys' home in Boston, and it was one of the mechanisms through which Phillis Wheatley sought whatever financial or cultural support that she could get for the publication of this book. So perhaps unsurprisingly, some initial purchasers of the book came from that community. Not solely; I don't want to make that claim because Wheatley was using her own black communication networks to sell copies through her friends.

It's not surprising that the book was being sold within that community, but having the data structured through provenance records and makes it easier to visualize that and also stake a claim about it. I hope somebody works more with that data and tries to figure out how this evangelical network actually existed and who these people were.

What can the early American scholar community do to aid in this project?

Tell us about the copies that are at your institution; not just the 18th century editions that we already have cataloged, although I know that there are probably more to be found than the ones that we have. Send us information about what's on your campus, what's in the public library system near you. I'm hoping that people will send high quality photographs or encourage their campuses, if possible, to digitize the ones that they have. Again, not just the first edition, but any editions, at least through 1909 or 1930. Right now, I'm just limiting it to 1909 because once you get to the 20th century, the scale of publication changes.

"The Wheatley Census," inspired by the Shakespeare Census, assigns every copy within the census a durable number, and they go by edition. So the first editions get a number in the 1000s, the second, the 2000s. One thing this allows us to do, and that I really want to encourage members of this community in particular to do, is cite the specific copy that you're working with, especially when you're making reference to things like marginalia. "The Wheatley Census" architecture provides durable citation of copy level information.

There are things that are bibliographically unique across the printing of what we call sort of generally the first edition. And as we get more of that information and research shared, I really would love to see more copy specific research about this really important work.

Kaitlyn Tonti
Raritan Valley Community College

Scholarly Musings
Reflecting on Three Decades and More of Colloquies

Recently I've updated the list of interdisciplinary colloquies that I have organized and frequently chaired, beginning in the mid-1990s, at conferences of the Society of Early Americanists as well as several SEA-adjacent organizations. When I sent a copy of that updated list to a number of the scholars whose books had been the focus of roundtables on that list, Laura Stevens' response was prompt and quite succinct:

"I've always found this format to be helpful for taking a step back and reflecting on how a single publication fits within a larger scholarly conversation. It's a great opportunity to take a snapshot of the field and consider how one single publication can change our vantage point."

The list now includes the panel last March on Kathleen DuVal's Pulitzer- and Bancroft-winning *Native Nations: A Millennium in North America*, at the biennial conference of the Southeastern American Studies Association, as well as the roundtable I'm proposing for the next SASA conference, in March 2027, on Marcus Rediker's *Freedom Ship: The Uncharted History of Escaping Slavery by Sea*. Also, I'm working with Sari Altshuler to get a colloquy on her brand-new book *Before Disability: A History of American Citizenship* onto the schedule for another interdisciplinary conference later next year.

Meanwhile, speaking of Marcus Rediker, his earlier book *The Slave Ship* had been the focus of a colloquy in 2009, at the first biennial conference the SEA staged outside North America, at Hamilton, Bermuda. Thank you yet again!, Tom Krise, for having arranged for that move. Quoting here from Prof. Rediker's recent e-mail:

"Dear Dennis,

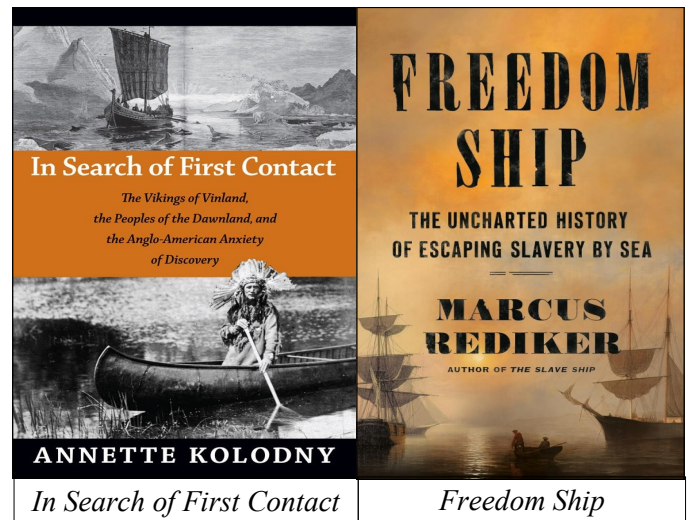
I had no idea that you've done 70+ colloquy-with-the-author sessions. Congratulations! I'll just say that my book *The Slave Ship: A Human History* has received a lot of reviews and discussion over the past nineteen years, but never deeper nor better than in the session you organized in 2009. Thank you."

It's worth noting here that in 2010 the journal *Atlantic Studies* published a lengthy cover piece on that colloquy and that print follow-ups to other roundtables on this list have appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly*, *New England Quarterly*, *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* and *commonplace.org* as well as in *Early American Literature's* special 2012 issue, "Between Literature and History."

Another recent response came from Shelley Fisher Fishkin, who participated in both the colloquies recognizing the value of the late Annette Kolodny's scholarship. Each was at an American Studies Association conference: the one in 1998 focused on *Failing the Future: A Dean Looks at Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century*, and the focus 16 years later was on her *In Search of First Contact*. Now, quoting here from that recent e-mail:

"Dear Dennis,

It was a pleasure and a privilege to participate in your colloquy-with-the-author session with Annette Kolodny on her book, *In Search of First Contact: the Vikings of Vinland, the Peoples of the Dawnland, and the Anglo-American Anxiety of Discovery*. It was a memorable conversation that introduced many who had not read her book to the provocative and important ideas she explored, and the multiple perspectives from the panelists deepened the understanding of those who had read the book. I know the event meant the world to Annette, someone who was a pioneer in foregrounding both feminist and indigenous issues in American Studies. She had never really gotten the attention she deserved for her ground-breaking and paradigm-shifting research throughout her career, and your panel allowed more junior scholars like myself to give credit where credit was due. Thank you for organizing it!"

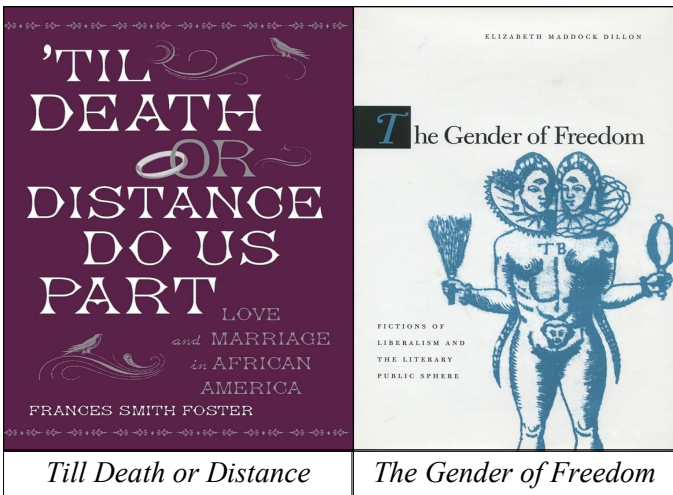


Other than the late Annette Kolodny, the only scholar to have two books on this list is Elizabeth Maddock Dillon, who received the Barnard Hewitt Award for Outstanding Research in Theatre History in 2015 as well as a Finalist Mention for the 1915 John Hope Franklin Prize for her *New World Drama*.

Her earlier book, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere*, was the focus of a plenary session at the SEA's joint conference in 2007, at Williamsburg and Jamestown, with the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture.

Frances Smith Foster's *'Til Death and Distance Do Us Part: Love and Marriage in African America* was the focus of a colloquy at the SEA's "Triumph in My Song: Eighteenth- and Nine-teenth-Century African Atlantic Culture, History and Performance" conference in 2012 at the University of Maryland. More recently, she responded to these colloquies like so:

"Generally, I pour heart and mind into a project only to hear the sound of silence. The conversation around my book was a dream come true. It didn't hurt that they liked it, but the true pleasure was knowing they read it and gave me the gift of informed critique. It was the intellectual exchange I had dreamed the academy provided but in reality I had never found before -- or after!"



That book is of course one of many on this list that examine the transatlantic slave trade and its legacy. It's a pattern that also includes the only session in this list that did not include the book's author (Nicholas Katzenbach had to cancel). We went ahead with the panel, at the 1999 A.S.A. conference, on *The Shape of the River* and its insights into affirmative action.

While almost all these colloquies in the first two decades of this century focused on slavery, several focused on indigenous culture: Joanna Brooks' *American Lazarus: Religion and the Rise of African American and Native American Literatures*, at the A.S.A. conference in 2006, and three at American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies conferences.

This included Laura Stevens' *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans and Colonial Sensibility*, Hilary Wyss's *English Letters and Indian Literacies: Reading, Writing, and New England Missionary Schools, 1750-1830*, and Matt Cohen's *The Networked Wilderness*.

Still other colloquies on books dealing primarily with slavery included ones with Vin Carretta on *Equiano the African: Biography of a Self-Made Man* in 2007; with Stephanie Smallwood in 2009 on *Saltwater Slavery*; with Annette Gordon-Reed on *The Hemingses of Monticello*, at the SEA's 2011 conference; and with Ramesh Mallipeddi on *Spectacular Slavery: Witnessing Slavery in the Eighteenth-Century British Atlantic*. Brigitte Fielder, a participant in the colloquy on Ed Baptist's *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism*, commented recently:

"I always loved the colloquy-with-the-author sessions because they both give folks a chance to engage deeply with an extended piece of scholarship and prompt a conversation that inevitably pushes this engagement forward, toward new directions. They were super helpful for thinking about how and in what contexts one might cite texts, but also how we might teach with them."

Another prominent pattern involves award-winning books. Like Kathleen DuVal most recently, Eric Foner received both a Pulitzer and a Bancroft for *The Fiery Trial*, and Annette Gordon-Reed received a Pulitzer for *The Hemingses of Monticello*, for which she also received a National Book Award.



Like DuVal, Lisa Brooks also received a Bancroft for *Our Beloved Kin*, and the colloquy on that book was the first of these panels to be virtual, thanks to the pandemic.

Recipients of the *Early American Literature Book Prize* have included Anna Brickhouse for *The Unsettling of America*, for which she also received the Modern Language Association's James Russell Lowell Prize and was one of two finalists for the American Studies Association's 1915 John Hope Franklin Prize for the year's best book in American studies.

It also includes Caroline Wigginton for *In the Neighborhood: Women's Publication in Early America*, Robert L. Gunn for *Ethnology and Empire*, Wendy Roberts for *Awakening Verse*, and Lindsay DiCuirci for *Colonial Revivals: The Nineteenth Century Lives of Early American Books*, which also received the 2020 First Book Award from the Library Company of Philadelphia.

Joanna Brooks received the Modern Language Association's William Sanders Scarborough Prize for *American Lazarus*. This colloquy at ASECS's 2016 conference featured a pair of books: Russ Castronovo's *Propaganda 1776* and William Beatty Warner's *Protocols of Liberty*, recipient of ASECS's Gottschalk Prize.

I'm grateful that Peter Reed graciously agreed to chair the roundtable on that especially impressive book at the A.S.A.'s 2021 conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Here is Ralph's recent comment about these colloquies

"Over the years, these sessions have grown into an institution and fixture not only at the SEA biennials but also at the conferences of adjacent organizations, including ASECS and ASA. They have provided important opportunities for critical and friendly engagement with recent publications in our field and hereby given authors much welcome recognition of their accomplishment and the unique opportunity for reflection on their work. I hope that these sessions will continue to be part of all conferences in our field."

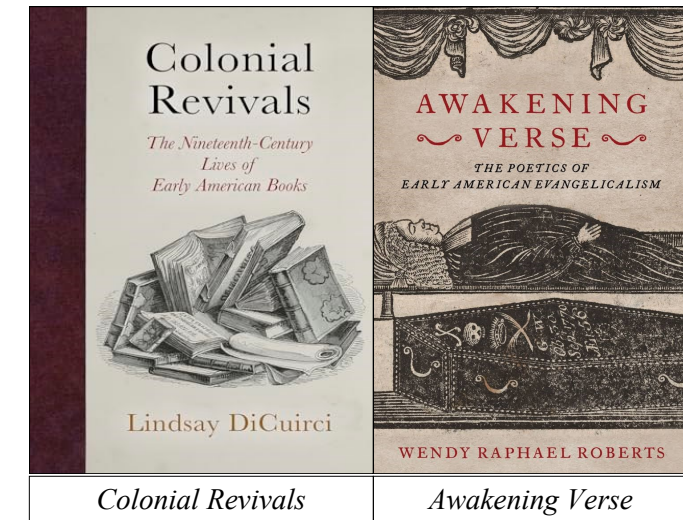
Here's the recent comment by Theresa Gaul, who had been especially helpful in cooking up the roundtable at the SEA's June 2023 conference on Wendy Roberts' book *Awakening Verse*:

"Over the years, the book colloquies that Dennis Moore has organized have been an important marker of significant work in the field. Even when I haven't been able to attend the session and/or conference, I paid attention to which book he selected and added it to my reading list. In addition, Dennis's work has facilitated publications, as when the panelists discussing Wendy Roberts' *Awakening Verse* went on to publish our responses as a roundtable in *New England Quarterly* in 2024.

I suspect there are additional publications resulting from the colloquies we don't even know about, and in this way the discussion encouraged by the sessions has served as a fertile ground for prompting new scholarship. A generous and rigorously conceptualized contribution to our field, Dennis's consistent organization of the colloquies has made them a distinctive and memorable feature of conferences."

Thanks to the participants in these colloquies, each and all, as well as to each colleague whose comments I've cut and pasted into this narrative -- and a hearty **Thanks Again** to everyone who has attended these sessions over the years.

Dennis Moore
Florida State's OLLI program; SASA Board; Advisory Board for FSU's Civil Rights Institute



Two other responses to the updated list of these colloquies came from colleagues who had participated in conferences I was unable to attend. Ralph Bauer received the Modern Language Association's Aldo and Jeanne Scaglione Prize for Comparative Literature for his *The Alchemy of Conquest*.

Upcoming Conferences

**American Literature Association (ALA)
Symposium: “American Poetry”
Salem, MA
March 26-28, 2026**

**American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies
(ASECS)
Philadelphia, PA
April 9-11, 2026**

**American Literature Association (ALA)
Chicago, IL
May 20-23, 2026**

Call for Papers

Pauline Maier Early American History Seminar Taken from the Massachusetts Historical Society [Call for Proposals](#)

The Pauline Maier Early American History Seminar invites proposals for sessions in its 2026-2027 series. The Seminar involves discussion of pre-circulated works in progress, especially article or chapter-length papers (20-30 pages), focusing on any aspect of American history and culture from the era of first contact through the 1820s. Papers comparing the American experience with developments elsewhere in the world are welcome, as are cross-disciplinary studies.

Each session focuses on the discussion of a paper distributed to seminar registrants approximately three weeks before the program. Authors must have their papers ready for circulation at this time. The essayist and an assigned commentator will each have an opportunity for remarks before the discussion is opened to the floor. Sessions may take place virtually or in a hybrid format as conditions allow.

We invite proposals (500 words) and CVs (3 pages maximum) from interested researchers.

In your proposal, please indicate when your paper can be available for distribution, as well as your preference (fall or spring) based on when the seminar’s feedback would be helpful to you.

Advise us of any special scheduling conditions, such as a planned trip to Boston, an extended period when you cannot make a presentation, or if you would prefer to present remotely. The steering committee will consider all proposals for the available session slots, and proposers will be notified by early summer.

Please submit your proposals by **15 April 2026** to seminars@masshist.org.

“American Carnage” Canadian Association for American Studies Conference

This conference takes its title from the multiple resonances of the term, “American carnage” and what it means literally and figuratively. **Please note:** CAAS is open to any and all papers on American Studies, not limited to the specific topic of each year’s conference, but we particularly invite papers that address this broad topic in the United States from different disciplinary approaches and over all time periods. Some themes might include (but are not limited) to the following:

- American carnage as fantasy
- American carnage and the American Dream
- Carnivores, factory farms, and the ecological
- Colonial and imperial violence
- Climate change and geopolitics
- Violence and state formation
- Labour organization and anti-labour actions
- Violence as / against resistance
- Genres of carnage: utopias, dystopias, horror, and more
- Flesh, fantasy, and identities

Please email 250-word proposals and brief bios by April 15, 2026 to caasconference26@gmail.com and please include the subject line: **CAAS 2026 CFP Submission**.

For more information, please visit this [website](#)



PAMLA 2026 Conference

The 123rd annual PAMLA Conference will be held between November 12-15, 2026 at the Hyatt Regency in Seattle, Washington.

PAMLA welcomes [special session proposals](#) (both on and off theme) for the 2026 PAMLA conference on topics of scholarly interest that are not too close to the topics of our standing sessions (see below to find a list of PAMLA's general/standing sessions). **Special session and paper submissions are not limited to the theme of this year's conference, "Our Ruling Classes."** But if you'd like to touch on the theme that would be most welcome.

As our PAMLA 2026 theme, "**Our Ruling Classes: Culture, Power, Conflict**," PAMLA welcomes special session proposals on a wide array of creative, scholarly, literary, filmic, or cultural topics. Submissions related to the distribution of power, birthright aristocracy in literature and culture, and revolutionary movements against traditional hierarchies are particularly welcome.

The 2026 special session proposal deadline is March 15, 2026. To submit a session proposal, log into pam-la.ballastacademic.com (you will need to create an account there if you've never done so before), click on the Propose Session button, and follow the directions from there.

The 2026 PAMLA Conference welcomes paper or presentation submissions on all topics for discussion in its panels, roundtables, and other PAMLA events. This year's conference theme accommodates but does not require presentations that examine the stories people tell to venerate departed elders, to celebrate the achievements of legendary heroes, or to constitute a collective identity around narratives of shared hardship. It also invites proposals on the counter-narratives that have emerged to deplore hubris and elitism, to identify and decry tyranny.

Paper proposals will be due by Sept. 30, 2026.

*PAMLA encourages special session proposals with alternative formats, such as roundtables, workshops, special and creative events. While PAMLA will consider pre-planned sessions, we encourage session proposals that will welcome paper proposals from a wide variety of scholars, not just scholars from the presiding officer's host institution.



ESC Mentoring Program

The Emerging Scholars Caucus invites scholars of all levels to contribute to our mentoring program. Mentoring relationships enhance junior scholars' access to professional opportunities, integrate junior scholars into the SEA community of researchers, and facilitate excellent intellectual work.

We pair mentors and mentees based on a discrete task, like providing advice on a specific career stage, reading the work in progress of a mentee, writing recommendation letters upon familiarity with a mentee's work, or providing feedback on teaching and syllabi. We will also provide opportunities for mentors and mentees to network at conferences.

For more information please visit [this website](#).

SEA Council of Officers

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[SEA Website](#)



To Our Members

The SEA thanks its new and renewing members for their invaluable support of our Society. Your contributions make early American studies thrive. Please remember to keep your membership current and direct any membership inquiries to the Executive Coordinator, Caroline Wigginton.

You can also help build our membership by referring colleagues in the field to the [Society's homepage](#).

Society Information/Membership

The Society of Early Americanists provides a forum for scholarly and pedagogical exchange and professional support among scholars of various disciplines who study the literature and culture of America to approximately 1830. Our membership of over 350 individuals enjoys a bi-yearly newsletter detailing activities in our field, a website that links to many documents of interest to early American scholars and teachers, and a listserv. We also offer opportunities for networking and dissemination of professional work.

If you are interested in joining the Society, please see the membership information [here](#).

Opportunities for Giving

In addition to keeping your SEA membership active, you can contribute to the [Fund to Honor Excellence in Teaching](#).

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