

MELUS 2019 Call For Papers

Join us for the 33rd Annual MELUS (Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States) conference in Cincinnati, OH!

Date: March 21-24, 2019
Hilton Netherland Plaza, 35 W 5th St., Cincinnati, OH

Conference Theme: Underground Histories

Keynote Speakers: Viet Thanh Nguyen and Saidiya Hartman

Deadline for abstracts: October 15, 2018

The theme of the 2019 MELUS conference begins from the premise that a subterranean history beats below every official narrative. What stories get told? What stories get erased or moved to the periphery? How do multi-ethnic literature, film, narrative media, and performance bring to light these critical narratives?

Cincinnati is a diverse and thriving Midwestern city with a deep connection to a variety of underground histories. The city has a storied past as a hub of the Underground Railroad, as well as a complicated, contradictory, and largely-untold ethnic and racial narrative of its own. Host to a huge wave of German and German Jewish immigration during the nineteenth century, Cincinnati is the site of the nation's first Reform Jewish seminary and home to one of its most famous bootleggers, a German immigrant who provided Fitzgerald with the model for Jay Gatsby. Directly across the Ohio River from Northern Kentucky, the city has seen multiple waves of African American migration from the South—from the dangerous travels of runaway slaves escaping across the river to the later movements of those seeking an often-elusory emancipation in the city. A number of Japanese citizens were relocated to the city after World War II, carrying with them a tragic, and often untold, story of internment and state violence.

Recently, Cincinnati has seen an influx of Latinx immigrants and become a sanctuary city, opening its borders to refugees whose stories face erasure by Trump era immigration policies. At the same time, Cincinnati, past and present, hosts demographic groups and artists less acknowledged in conventional histories, such as Appalachian and Affrilachian communities. All of these narratives collectively represent Cincinnati's underground histories—as well as the centrality of untold stories to American racial and ethnic history and aesthetics.

We welcome proposals for individual papers, panels, and roundtables, as well as creative writing and pedagogical discussions, on the broad spectrum of underground histories in multi-ethnic literature, culture, and performance including, but not limited to:

- Representations of the underground railroad
- The collision between official and untold histories
- Erasure and writing back
- Disability, race, and ethnicity
- Strategies for teaching race and ethnicity in the literature and creative writing classroom
- Counter-canons in multiethnic literature
- Contemporary underground movements, such as Black Lives Matter and Dreamers
- Borderlands, migration, and transnational identity
- Ecological disaster
- The experience of being a writer or critic of color
- Underground media (comics, street art, oral storytelling, presses, online communities)
- The erasure of LGBTQ narratives from multiethnic histories
- Intersectionality
- Relationship between center and periphery communities in urban space (e.g. Appalachian and black communities in Ohio, gentrification, etc.)
- Legal and “illegal” immigration before and after Trump

We also welcome proposals on all aspects of multi-ethnic US literature and narrative media.

To propose a scholarly paper, panel, or roundtable, please send a 250-300 word abstract and a short bio. To present creative work, send 3-5 poems and up to 5 pages of prose, and a short bio. Send all proposals to melus2019@gmail.com by October 15th, 2018. For more information about MELUS, The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, visit <http://www.melus.org>; for more information about the MELUS journal, visit <https://academic.oup.com/melus>. For more information about the University of Cincinnati's English department, and its graduate programs in Literature, Creative Writing, Rhetoric and Composition, and Professional Writing, please visit <https://www.artsci.uc.edu/departments/english>.

