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MLA News **etter**



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Online from 7 to 10 January
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You Asked and We Answered

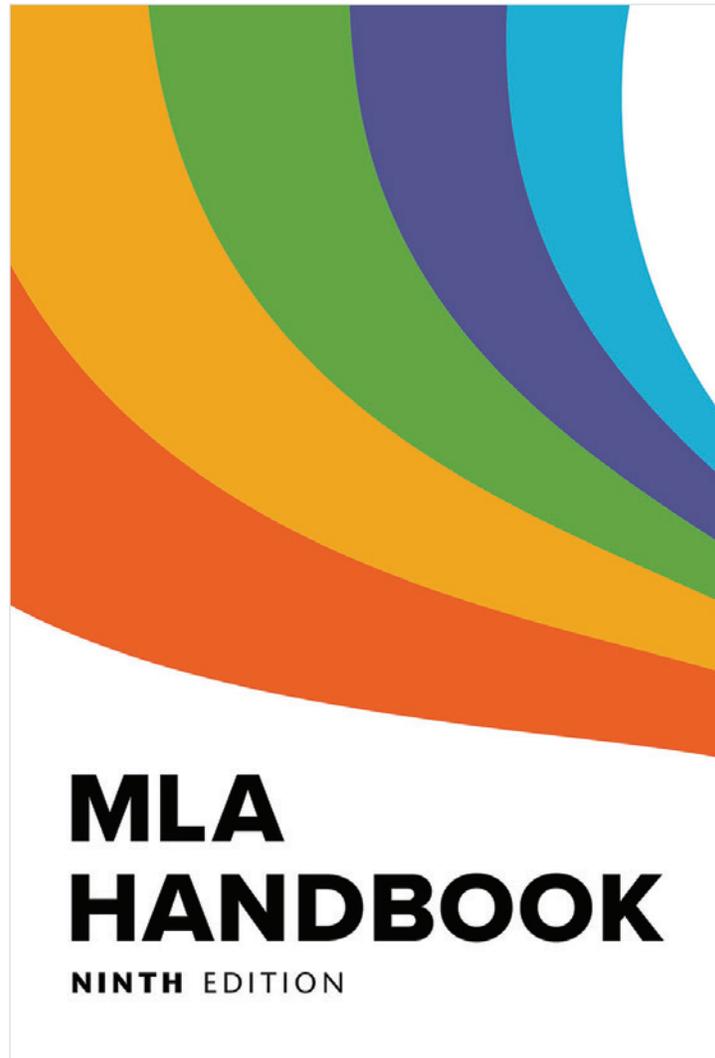
How We Developed the New *MLA Handbook*

In 2016 the MLA published the eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook* and launched a free online companion site, *The MLA Style Center*. Since then, students, educators, and writers from all over the world have sent thousands of questions to us through the Ask the MLA feature on the site. We quickly realized that we weren't just providing answers to questions—we were also learning about what we could do to support those using MLA style. These questions have guided our development of the ninth edition, forthcoming in April 2021. Though feedback from style users has always shaped the handbook, this edition reflects even more voices than past editions did.

As part of the development process, we asked for comments on drafts from librarians, teachers, and students at a wide range of institutions in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere.

We also reached out to writing center instructors to see what resources they need. In addition, we considered feedback from workshops and webinars and analyzed it alongside the questions sent to the *Style Center*. MLA staff editors, who work with MLA style every day, then weighed in on what changes we should incorporate.

The eighth edition introduced our unique system for documenting sources



using a template of core elements—facts common to most sources, like author, title, and publication date. Using the template, writers can document any type of source. But the questions we received made clear that students and teachers wanted more guidance on the range of situations that the elements apply to, as well as more examples. Thus, readers will find expanded, in-depth explanations for what each core element is,

where to find it, and how to style it and an appendix with hundreds of sample works-cited-list entries listed by publication format.

Although the method of citing sources in the text has remained unchanged through several editions, style users nonetheless frequently ask us questions about how to create in-text citations and properly key them to the works-cited list. So we have provided a new, easy-to-follow explanation focusing on basic principles and examples that pair in-text citations with their corresponding works-cited-list entries.

Reflecting additional feedback that the handbook be more comprehensive, the ninth edition goes beyond documentation to address other important aspects of writing, including quoting and paraphrasing, using notes and inclusive language, avoiding plagiarism, formatting a research paper, and styling prose. By

responding to style users' questions and comments, we have aimed to publish an all-in-one resource that makes MLA style easier to learn and use for all writers.

Visit *The MLA Style Center* to learn more about what's new in the ninth edition, and check out the MLA website for our companion titles, the *MLA Guide to Undergraduate Research* and the *MLA Guide to Digital Literacy*.



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

The Future of Humanities PhDs

Comment on this column at president.mla.hcommons.org.

IT HAS BEEN A CHALLENGING TIME AT

the MLA as we face the transformation of work under COVID-19 and fresh threats to the future of the humanities. The report by the MLA Taskforce on Ethical Conduct in Graduate Education focused on power dynamics in graduate education. It clearly opposes the unacceptable conditions for students who face harassment and neglect as well as debt and impending financial precarity, and it sets MLA guidelines for faculty conduct (*Report*). The pandemic has made life even more difficult for graduate students, intensifying racial and economic disparities and underscoring the need for graduate student participation in deciding the safety of their environments for teaching and studying.

For many years, the MLA has sought to be an advocate for graduate students, who are too often underpaid and whose career trajectories are increasingly uncertain as academic job opportunities dwindle (e.g., Arteaga and Woodward). Our resources for those pursuing a range of career paths, including the Mellon-funded Connected Academics project, have proven to be indispensable as many graduate programs seek to adapt their placement programs to a changing market for PhDs. The MLA has worked closely with the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) in developing its fellowship programs that offer humanities PhDs a way to put their knowledge to work in the service of public art, legal assistance, health care, cultural preservation and innovation, journalism, archives, and forms of activism including antiracist initiatives and climate justice projects. Yet too

many of us remain attached to an academic culture that reproduces the same graduate curriculum and training without regard for the shrinking academic market that awaits most of our students. Including diverse career options as part of placement program is a first and necessary step (“Where?”). But now it has become obligatory to include the public humanities as part of required graduate education as well. That way we prepare students through internships and inter-

disciplinary collaborations for paid work with the PhD, and we revitalize our profession as more responsive to historical conditions and more active in bringing our capacities to think about language, values, and critical judgment to bear on the transformation and repair of our public worlds.

“[I]t has become obligatory to include the public humanities as part of required graduate education. . . . That way we prepare students through internships and interdisciplinary collaborations for paid work with the PhD, and we revitalize our profession.”

disciplinary collaborations for paid work with the PhD, and we revitalize our profession as more responsive to historical conditions and more active in bringing our capacities to think about language, values, and critical judgment to bear on the transformation and repair of our public worlds.

It makes sense to suspend admission to a humanities graduate program for a year or two under the present circumstances, but only if we can guarantee that such actions won't be used as a pretext by administrations to shut down programs and departments. Some argue

that resources would be better used to support students who are already enrolled and are living in precarious conditions than to support new students now, when academic prospects are bleak (see, e.g., Hartman; Flaherty). Yet the decision to suspend graduate admissions is a risky one: administrations may demand that humanities departments close their graduate programs indefinitely or find external funding to fund those programs—and that response is a

form of extortion we must oppose (Tullman). There is a way to avoid this situation by restructuring programs such that the curriculum for language and literature imagines a wider range of future positions in the arts, culture, law, health, and public life.

If we train in the fields of public humanities as well as in established fields, structure internships into the program, and pursue the kinds of interdisciplinary and public connections that show the value of the humanities for the world, we make the public case for the humanities and take better

care of our PhD students (Cassuto). If we only argue, however, that the humanities have value because they are useful to businesses and profit-making parts of the university or the economy more generally, we accept a measure

traditions of public writing, discourse, storytelling, and critical engagement. Partnering with scientific research and public health, but also with environmental and science studies, seems timely and crucial, suggesting that we need to

“By strengthening the public humanities as part of graduate training, we have a chance to make clear to nonspecialists within educational institutions and the public sphere the value of what we do.”

of value that demeans or even destroys what we do—or relegates our fields to subservience to other fields. The public humanities offer an alternative vision, one that the ACLS, The Mellon Foundation (e.g., “Hunter College”), and New York University (“Public Humanities Initiative”) have affirmed and one that I hope other funders and educational institutions will increasingly come to value and support.

Further, if current trends continue, language and literature courses run the risk of becoming ornamental or service-oriented aspects of the university taught by adjuncts only. Intensifying adjunctification, as we know, undermines both tenure and faculty governance and, in most cases, health care and a livable wage. By strengthening the public humanities as part of graduate training, we have a chance to make clear to nonspecialists within educational institutions and the public sphere the value of what we do and how our commitment to education can help strengthen

support those fields that represent the intersection of science and literature, including narrative medicine and medical humanities, but also climate and social justice projects. We will then have employment possibilities that will justify our renewed programs, and we will turn out to live in the world we seek to understand and make the world a more livable place. A new imagining that restructures higher education for PhDs is required to combat climate change and racism, to establish all the lives considered dispensable as indispensable and invaluable, and to build shared life that reverses the social and racial inequalities intensifying in these nearly crushing times. We can create against and within these times a humanities for emergent and future publics.

Judith Butler

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Antiracist and Decolonizing Approaches to Pedagogy and Practice

Recent protests against the persistence of racism and colonialism have emphasized the urgency of antiracist and decolonizing practice. These seven sessions are designed to help you explore ways of integrating antiracist and decolonizing frameworks into your teaching, scholarship, and advising. Visit the online program for more sessions highlighting antiracist and decolonizing methodologies.

21. ANTIRACIST PRACTICES FOR WORKING WITH STUDENTS

Thursday, 7 January, 10:15–11:30 a.m.
Panelists explore how those working directly with students can be supportive of students of color by moving past “diversity” and into antiracism through the critical examination of current practices. Discussion focuses on innovative tools and methods—and mistakes made on the way to establishing them—from people who have adopted antiracist techniques for working with students and for reimagining students’ whole lived experience as having value.

83. LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Thursday, 7 January, 1:45–3:00 p.m.
Organized by the forum LSL Language, this session addresses a variety of issues at the intersection of language, diversity, identity, and pedagogy, including how to value linguistic diversity in grading and assessment, writing in a multilingual world, and Latino/a/x identity as it is revealed through *YouTube* videos.

122. TEACHING COLONIALISM NOW

Friday, 8 January, 3:30–4:45 p.m.
Teaching the topics, texts, and critical approaches of colonial Latin America

studies has never seemed more relevant and urgent. Panelists discuss the ways they make connections to contemporary issues, crises, and debates (such as racism, discrimination, economic inequality, climate change, genocide, pandemics) in their online and face-to-face classrooms through digital humanities projects, comparisons with modern texts and events, and other methods.

268. DECOLONIZE YOUR SYLLABUS WITH EARLY AFRICAN LITERATURE

Friday, 8 January, 1:45–3:00 p.m.
Organized by the forum LLC African to 1990, this session addresses the broad theme of decolonial pedagogy through approaches to teaching specific works of early African literature, including works by D. O. Fagunwa, Kobina Sekyi, J. E. Casely Hayford, and Amos Tutuola.

606. DECOLONIZING THE CURRICULUM IN ENGLISH AND WORLD LITERATURES

Sunday, 10 January, 12:00 noon–1:15 p.m.
Participants discuss theoretical rationales and practical implementations for decolonizing the curriculum in departments of English and world literatures. Beyond merely diversifying individual

courses, how can we responsibly decolonize major curricula?

633. POC19: CENTERING PEOPLE OF COLOR IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN STUDIES

Sunday, 10 January, 1:45–3:00 p.m.
This roundtable explores the state of nineteenth-century American literary studies by centering the voices, expertise, and perspectives of people of color. Panelists discuss how to do this work, focusing on research methodologies, pedagogical practices, and forms of institutional engagement.

709. ANTIRACIST PRACTICES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE WORK IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sunday, 10 January, 5:15–6:30 p.m.
Panelists consider the particular work and challenges of setting antiracist policies from an administrative standpoint and of supporting faculty and staff members doing antiracism work. How can career administrators and faculty members serving in leadership and administrative roles promote antiracist policies with substantive structural change that lead to equity for faculty and staff members and for students of color at their institutions?



Join us on 9 December (2:00 p.m. EST) for the MLA virtual event
“Graduate Education Postpandemic.”

Visit webinars.mla.org to register and to view recordings of past events.

Pursue Professionalization with Purpose

These six sessions at the 2021 convention are designed to help you approach your professional development with the same rigor, passion, and purpose that you already bring to your teaching and scholarship. Visit the online program for many more professional development opportunities.

5. TEACHING BY DESIGN: STRATEGIES FOR INTENTIONAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN THE HUMANITIES

Wednesday, 6 January, 11:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

This workshop teaches key concepts and practices in learning experience design, including motivation theory, types of assessments, and learning styles. Using participants' syllabi, attendees will redesign course elements by crafting explicit learning objectives and using backward design processes to facilitate students' journeys. The workshop emphasizes approaches that privilege accessibility, student collaboration and creativity, and multimodal learning.

228. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE PROGRAM INNOVATION ROOM

Friday, 8 January, 10:15 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Presenters share successful and promising new programs, courses, and initiatives in areas such as experiential learning, digital humanities, public humanities, and preparing students for diverse humanities careers.

300. ONLINE LEARNING IN THE HUMANITIES: LESSONS LEARNED

Friday, 8 January, 1:45–3:00 p.m.

This session features a discussion with experts in humanities online learning from a range of institution types: an instructional designer, a contingent faculty member with extensive online teaching experience, an Open Educational Resources pioneer, and a digital humanist. Come with questions.

539. NETWORKING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES FOR SCHOLARS OF COLOR

Saturday, 9 January, 5:15–6:30 p.m.

This collaborative and interactive session introduces a small tool kit for scholars of color (inside and outside academia) to confront the unique set of challenges they face as they establish new professional connections, to support their capacity to actively build a network that is comprehensively informed by their personal and professional identities, and to empower them to navigate those spaces more broadly.

616. CAREERS IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND THE JOB SEARCH

Sunday, 10 January, 1:45–3:00 p.m.

Professors from community colleges discuss the job search and careers in community colleges, application processes and materials, advice for the interview and teaching presentation, teaching loads, and service requirements for community college faculty members in English and other languages.

710. GENDER AND LABOR IN THE ACADEMY: STRUCTURES OF CARE AND POWER

Sunday, 10 January, 5:15–6:30 p.m.

How do we describe and resist the gendered divisions of different kinds of work in academia? How can we challenge the gendered structural frameworks that guide career decisions? How do we address the coding of certain kinds of labor as feminine and acknowledge inequalities without perpetuating false gender binaries? How do these issues intersect with race and class?

Speaking Out about COVID-19

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MLA Executive Council has issued or endorsed statements about COVID-19 and academic labor, faculty review and reappointment, student progress, the importance of libraries, and the value of the humanities. Visit the MLA website (mla.org/EC-Actions) to read these and other statements from the council.

- Joint Statement on COVID-19 and the Key Role of the Humanities and Social Sciences in the United States
- Resolution on Collection Development in the Time of COVID-19
- Updated Statement on COVID-19 and Academic Labor
- Joint Statement regarding Student Educational Progress during the COVID-19 Crisis
- Statement on COVID-19 and Academic Labor
- Joint Statement regarding Faculty Review and Reappointment Processes during the COVID-19 Crisis

And go to webinars.mla.org to hear recordings of the MLA virtual events “Is Higher Education Learning from the Pandemic?” and “Medicine, Narrative, Pandemic, and Power.”

To stay up to date on the MLA's response to the pandemic, please read the MLA News Digest and follow the news at news.mla.hcommons.org.

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Paula M. Krebs, Executive Director

Your Guide to MLA 2021

This year's MLA convention will be a new experience: we're going virtual! Registration is underway, the program is live, and we're making preparations for January. Stay up to date on the 2021 convention—visit our website to check out event highlights, plan your schedule, review best practices for presentations, and more.

INFORMATION FOR ATTENDEES

If you've got a question about MLA 2021, you'll find your answer on this page. It's the quickest way to get all the information you need to plan your convention.

Visit www.mla.org/Information-for-Attendees.

PRESSES AND PUBLISHERS

We'll have opportunities for you to connect with representatives from university presses, publishing houses, technology companies, and other exhibitors during the convention. Check out our exhibitor list to locate your favorites ahead of time. Visit <https://mla.confex.com/mla/2021/exhibits.cgi/ModuleExhibitorProgram/0>.

REGISTRATION ASSISTANCE

Are you a graduate student or a non-tenure-track faculty member? Are you

IMPORTANT DATES

2 DEC. 2020

Deadline for early registration

6 JAN. 2021

Preconvention workshops
for MLA 2021

7–10 JAN. 2021

2021 MLA Annual Convention

unemployed? If so, you may be eligible to apply for one of our registration grants. These grants help cover registration fees for our convention. For more information, visit www.mla.org/financial-assistance.

PRESIDENTIAL PLENARY: POETICS OF PERSISTENCE IN BLACK LIFE

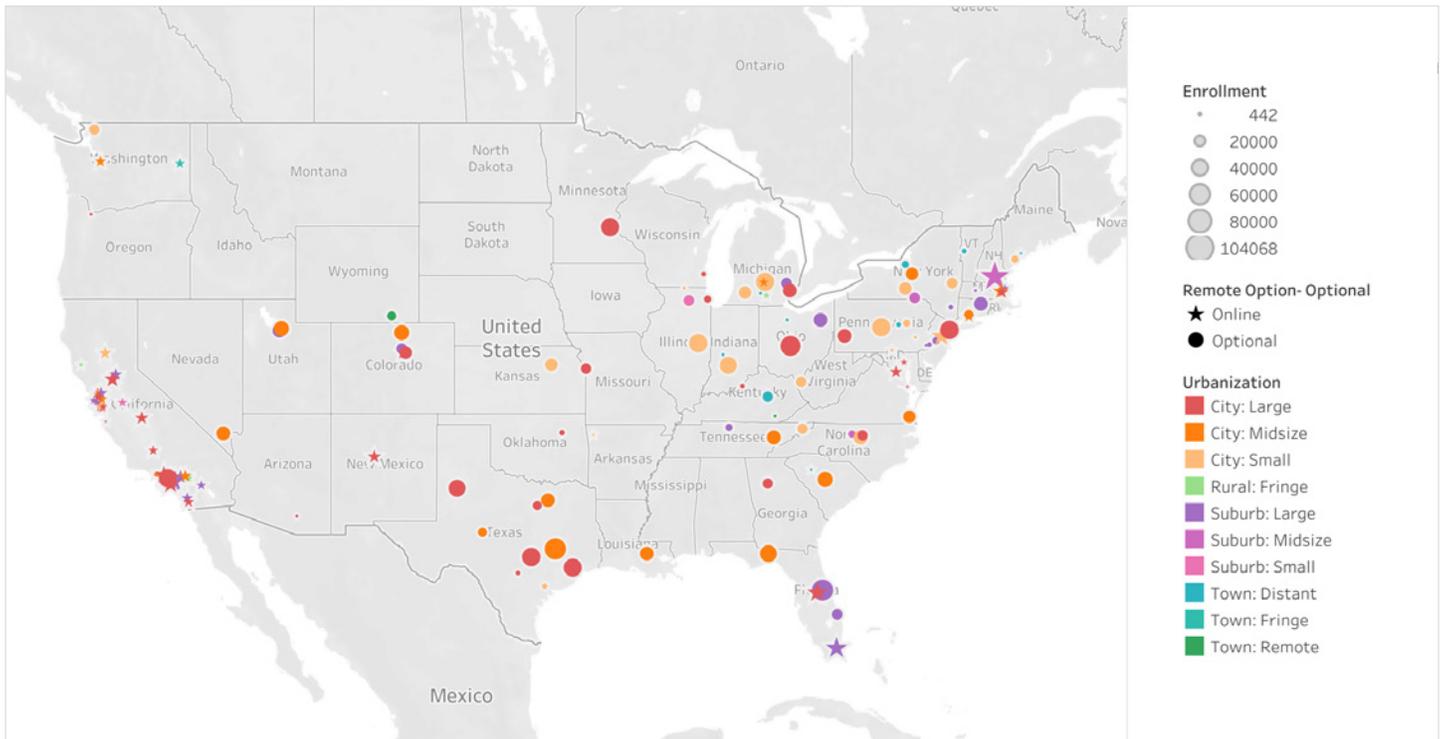
Hear from leading voices Claudia Rankine, M. NourbeSe Philip, Evie Shockley, and Fred Moten as they address creatively and critically the role played by Black poetry and poetics in the persistence of Black life.

PLANNING A CONVENTION SESSION

Need help preparing for or running your session? Visit www.mla.org/convention-planning.



Photo credit: Nat Seymour / Be Good Event Photography.



The Visionary Futures Collective COVID-19 Tracker

During the summer of 2020, as colleges and universities began announcing their plans for reopening, the Visionary Futures Collective (VFC) began tracking these plans. By documenting what looked—to us—like uneven, or perhaps uninformed, policy making, we hoped to provide a resource (available at <https://visionary-futures-collective.github.io/>) that our colleagues could use to advocate for change.

Founded at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Visionary Futures Collective seeks to understand the present and future of higher education in the United States. We are instructors, postdoctoral researchers, graduate students, staff members, and former academics. Many of us are contingent and precarious workers, and most of us have some affiliation with digital humanities tools and frameworks. From the margins of the profession, we looked to data to understand the shape of higher education’s response to the pandemic crisis. In our initial meetings we created space for the emotional and embodied responses that we were individually and collectively experiencing

about the pandemic, and we grew especially concerned with the sometimes diverging and unequal responses that our institutions were putting into practice. Inspired by the data collection efforts of one VFC member, Dawn Kaczmar, our growing collective turned to visualization to allow us and anyone who shared our concerns make sense of the range of policies. Using the then-available data from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (which has since made its data private), we mapped which schools were planning to bring students back to campus in any capacity and which were planning a fully remote semester.

Since we published this map in August 2020, many of us have shifted our focus to our other responsibilities: caregiving, teaching, administrative work, our nine-to-five jobs. Our most recent work—a weekly newsletter and survey—reflects this shift and continues to make space for connection and solidarity. We have also begun collecting data on childcare, eldercare, and the level of institutional support that these crucial policies receive, with the goal of ana-

lyzing and distributing this data to empower higher education workers across the country to advocate for themselves and their colleagues.

We intend to maintain space for possible futures for the humanities. And while we don’t know what those futures might be (especially given the ongoing pandemic and simultaneous climate, political, and other crises), we hope to build community and even find some joy.

For a more detailed and involved discussion of the VFC’s COVID-19 Response Tracker project, see Amanda Henrichs’s recent piece in *Nightingale* (<https://medium.com/nightingale/visionary-futures-and-making-change-in-the-academy-with-data-490da495c1ed>). You can also subscribe to the VFC’s newsletter and follow us on *Twitter* (@CoyoteAndBones).

Amanda Henrichs, visiting assistant professor of English at Amherst College, and Elizabeth Grumbach, assistant director of the Institute for Humanities Research at Arizona State University, are members of the Visionary Futures Collective.