

NeMLA Board Meeting
April 12, 2018
Omni William Penn
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
8:00 AM-11:00 AM

Executive Board Present

- Maria DiFrancesco, Ithaca College, President
- Simona Wright, The College of New Jersey, Vice President
- Carole Salmon, University of Massachusetts Lowell, Second Vice President
- Hilda Chacon, Nazareth College, Past President

Board Members Present

- John Casey, University of Illinois at Chicago, American Literature Director
- Elaine Savory, The New School, British Literature Director
- Katelynn DeLuca, Farmingdale State College, CAITY Caucus President and Representative
- Richard Schumaker, University of Maryland University College, Comparative Literature Director
- Christina Milletti, University at Buffalo, Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing Director
- Lisa Perdigao, Florida Institute of Technology, Cultural and Media Studies Director
- Maria Matz, University of Massachusetts Lowell, incoming Cultural and Media Studies Director
- Claudia Esposito, University of Massachusetts Boston, French and Francophone Language and Literature Director
- Alexander Pichugin, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, German Language and Literature Director
- Nicole Lowman, University at Buffalo, Graduate Student Caucus Representative
- Emanuela Pecchioli, University at Buffalo, Italian Language and Literature Director
- Susmita Roye, Delaware State University, Member-At-Large, Diversity
- Angela Fulk, Buffalo State, Pedagogy and Professionalism Director
- Maria Plochocki, Pedagogy and Professionalism Director
- Margarita Vargas, University at Buffalo, Spanish and Portuguese Language and Literature Director
- Rachel Spear, Francis Marion University, Women's and Gender Studies Caucus Representative
- Laurence Roth, Susquehanna University, Editor of *Modern Language Studies*

Non-Board Members Present

- Carine Mardorossian, University at Buffalo, Executive Director
- Derek McGrath, University at Buffalo, Administrative and Marketing Coordinator
- Brandi So, Stony Brook University, Incoming Second Vice President
- Benjamin Railton, Fitchburg State University, Incoming American Literature Director

- I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 8:12 AM by Executive Director Carine Mardorossian.
- II. Introductions of Board Members
- III. Approval of Fall 2017 minutes and of the Spring 2018 meeting agenda
 - A. Corrections to the Spring 2018 agenda were made
 - B. Approval of the Fall 2017 minutes
 1. Motion to approve by Cultural Studies Director Matz, seconded by President DiFrancesco.
- IV. Executive Director's Report
 - A. 2018 Convention
 1. Space and size: Because NeMLA had previously hosted a convention in Pittsburgh in 2004, the organization already had a lot of knowledge about the Omni William Penn. The Omni is an older hotel, so some rooms here were smaller than desired, which limited the number of second sessions. NeMLA worked with two off-site locations to host events. Both locations are within walking distance to the Omni.
 2. Off-site locations: First, NeMLA will host events at SPACE Art Gallery. These exhibits are co-organized by Carnegie Mellon University.
 3. Workshops: Second, NeMLA will host its annual workshops at the Heinz History Center. This partnership began by a request by the Heinz to organize their own workshop, then we approached them to be the location for our other workshops, too.
 4. Special Event Speakers: Thanks to the board attracting such dynamic Speakers. Please continue to co-sponsor speakers between Areas: doing so attracts more attendees per event.
 5. Free Books at Brunch: We also will be giving to attendees of our Brunch this Sunday for free a copy of the book for next year's opening speaker, thanks to our partnership with Penguin. We want to give away these free books in order to promote the reading.

6. NeMLA Reads Together: This initiative is intended to have members interview the speaker. We will start with Christina Miletto to model how to perform such an interview. We intend to submit the interview transcript with O'Nan to our peer-review journal, *Modern Language Studies*.
7. Poster Session: This year's poster session is the first to include presentations by more than Summer Fellows. Many of those scholars will be in attendance to present their posters.
8. Keynote Speaker and Institutional Support: We would not have been able to afford Rob Nixon as our keynote for the \$5,000 honorarium and reimbursements without the support of the University of Pittsburgh. These partnerships with local host institutions are important. In fact, this partnership persuaded Nixon to be in attendance at our convention longer than just for his talk: he also will participate in one session about his scholarship.
9. Brunch this year will start after the Membership Meeting's initial announcements and discussions to encourage people to sit through the meeting and to reduce eating and serving noises.
10. New 2018 Convention Opportunities
 - a) Job Clinic: Thanks to Professionalization Coordinator Claire Sommers, the CV Clinic has expanded, and Publishing Mentorship Program was introduced. This effort is one part of NeMLA's goals of providing similar opportunities year-round.
 - b) Selected Areas and Topics: Please look in your tote bag for the flyer for Selected Special Area and Special Topics, a way to expand on the Subject Area option.
 - c) Social Contests: We have the Photo Contest again, we have moved the Scavenger Hunt as a responsibility by NeMLA to specifically the Women's and Gender Studies Caucus in order to explore the city, and next year we will have the oldest tote bag contest.
 - d) The Receptions are great for networking tonight, Friday, and Saturday. The networking signs will come back. Encourage speakers to attend receptions.
11. Second Sessions: This year, second sessions were granted primarily to underrepresented areas. It was noted that NeMLA had to promote African American and Asian American studies. We also have to be aware that some second session requests are approved but then declined by the chair themselves because they did not line

up presenters before requesting second sessions. While it is possible for NeMLA to rank these requests so we know what to prioritize, we anticipate this will be less of a problem in larger cities, where we can afford to have more second sessions.

B. Future Conventions

1. As you prepare for the 50th Anniversary Convention in Washington, DC, please look for local writers. For example, the DC Writers Series at area universities may show you potential speakers to invite to NeMLA--or allow us to position our speakers at the DC Writers Series. After this conference, start immediately to recruit Washington DC speakers.
2. We have already confirmed the Opening and Keynote Speaker for the Washington, DC, 2019 convention, and a creative speaker for the Boston 2020 convention.
3. Baltimore 2022: We booked them again for 2022.
4. Special Events Stipend and Honorarium:
 - a) Before, we had the honorarium increased in price to cover travel--and speakers still expect their travel reimbursed. Therefore, we will return to offering a stipend.
 - b) Keeping speakers local avoids travel costs, and co-sponsoring will double your total budget.
 - c) Have the speaker book their travel and hotel, then submit reimbursement to NeMLA. In some cases, you may offer NeMLA to book travel for those speakers. NeMLA has free hotel rooms with the convention location, so we need to use that option: make the speakers book at the convention hotel. The speaker receives a maximum of 1 night covered by NeMLA at the convention hotel
 - d) Contract and Reimbursement Limit: Revise your contract to the speaker before they sign it
 - e) Communicate with Speakers: Please increase communications with speakers more frequently and earlier than the convention, including giving a deadline for booking travel and to arrive at the convention.
 - f) For the Women's and Gender Studies Caucus, either the Board Representative or President can be the point-person to communicate with the Speaker.
 - g) If you have requests for a speaker outside of these parameters, including requests or cost, please email ED Mardorossian for review, discussion, and approval.

- h) VP Wright, President DiFrancesco, and Alexander Pichugin all volunteered to set up a template for letters to Speakers to invite them to speak and to establish parameters.
 - 5. Accepting Sessions: Please check target numbers of sessions for each area from Executive Director before you consider the number of sessions and second sessions to accept. You can send automatic emails to chairs whether you accept their session, and you have the option to revise that message to your needs.
 - 6. Finalizing Sessions: Discussion turned to whether to have the finalization deadline changed to allow enough time to combine sessions on similar topics but which each have too few submissions. While a two-paper session may be appropriate in language areas makes sense, it is less necessary for cultural studies.
 - 7. Please pick up copies of the “Call for Session Proposals” flyers and posters at Brunch to share with your department. We will do a mass mailing before the May 29 session proposal deadline. We also will email the digital file for you: please send it to all departments relevant in your Area, not just at your university. *MLS* Editor Roth offered to include the poster in *Modern Language Studies*.
- C. Essay Awards: NeMLA is moving up deadlines by which Area and Caucus Directors must submit the names, institutions, and essay titles for winning essays so that NeMLA Staff has them earlier to allow sufficient time to make out checks and prepare the Brunch agenda.
- D. Outgoing and Incoming Board and Board Nominations:
 - 1. Incoming Board should review resources in Dropbox and read the bylaws.
 - 2. Outgoing directors should make time for meeting their successors. We encourage bringing back prior behavior, such as meeting with your successor outside of the convention for a meal.
 - 3. Please also recruit incoming Board candidates from among participants at the convention. We would like to recruit Vice Presidential candidates from the host institution for the convention in the year when they will be President.
- V. SurveyMonkey Results: Earlier this year, a survey was sent to Board members to review.
 - A. Question 1: “The NeMLA Executive Board is permitted to make statements about important political issues. The statements will be shared with the overall Board. The Board will receive 24 hours to endorse or to provide suggestions. Should the full Board fail to respond by 24 hours

after the statement is sent to them, the statement will be sent to members in the name of the Executive Board only.”

1. Result: 20 voted “Yes,” 1 “No.”
 2. There was debate whether to expand to 48 hours, with some concern whether to wait more than 24 hours is to be too late, not as current, and the process of re-writing each time before distributing any such statement in light of new evidence. Consensus seemed to be that Board members would have 48 hours to ask to have their name included; if they do not reply, their name is not included. And there would be 48 hours to offer revisions.
 3. There were also concerns whether it is possible to respond to enough such issues, and which ones are relevant to NeMLA’s business, including international travel restrictions.
 4. There were also concerns whether Board members had the option to refuse to include their name in such statements. ED Mardorossian clarified that the poll is not about receiving General Board approval but whether the Executive Board can move forward without the General Board’s approval.
 5. There was also discussion whether these guidelines should be explained to the NeMLA membership on the NeMLA web site, perhaps in the bylaws. And there was consideration whether to have a committee to communicate these guidelines to the membership for a vote at the 2019 Washington, DC, convention’s brunch.
 6. There was also discussion how best to receive requests by members to issue statements.
- B. Questions 2 and 3 were about Creative, so Creative Writing Area Director Christina Milletti took over discussion.
1. Question 2: “NeMLA will add to its session proposal web site the option to submit proposals for Readings, which will be defined specifically to differentiate it from the similar but distinct category of Creative Sessions.” 18 voted “Yes,” 2 “No.”
 2. Question 3: “NeMLA will pursue the option to allow invited Creative speakers to display their books, whether at a separate table at the Exhibit Hall or at the Registration area of the convention.” 19 voted “Yes,” 1 “No.”
 3. Creative Director Milletti explained that these categories would allow to better promote authors so they are not just seen as “Creative.” The goal is to make the categories more specific--such as calling them “hybrid,” “scholarly,” and “readings.”

- C. Question 4: “NeMLA bylaws should be amended to specify whether, when, and how frequently to allow former Board members to be considered for the same position(s) they have held on the Board previously and to be considered for other positions they have not held previously on the Board.”
 - 1. 17 voted “yes,” 3 “No.”
 - 2. This question will continue to be discussed both online and in the Fall 2018 meeting. It’s not that people are rushing to get back on the Board, but we need clarity whether there needs to be a number of years before someone can come back, such as whether someone could run for a second term. It may be useful to bring in thoughts of previous Board members, especially related to bringing back previous Board members.
 - D. The discussion included whether such topics need formal meetings outside of just the Board Fall and Spring meeting to be voted on earlier than the convention itself. And discussion moved onto how to increase membership engagement and to encourage members’ input in the Board discussion, such as opening up volunteer opportunities.
 - E. Carine asks the Board to develop a committee of people who will write guidelines about returning candidates. This committee will include the current Executive Committee and WGS Caucus Representative Rachel Spear, to file a report at the Fall 2018 Board meeting.
- VI. Officer Reports
- A. President’s Report, Maria DiFrancesco
 - 1. As President DiFrancesco has been involved with NeMLA since she was a graduate student, she wishes to thank the organization for their support. She also acknowledges Claire for developing mentorship opportunities, which she hopes NeMLA can continue to provide, especially for international students and candidates. She also thanks GSC Representative Nicole Lowman for introducing yoga to this year’s convention to help balance work and life.
 - B. First Vice President’s Report, Simona Wright
 - 1. The 50th Anniversary Convention’s Opening Speaker is confirmed, and thanks to Claire Sommers, the Keynote Speaker will be Homi Bhabha.
 - 2. Georgetown University will be the host institution, and we want to open this year’s convention to DC-area universities to integrate them into the convention.

3. Please reach out to more African American scholars to include more sessions in African American studies. Everyone suggested reaching out to Howard University.
4. Please look for intersections to encourage interdisciplinarity.
5. VP Wright is in the process of publishing the next issue of *Italian Studies*. Someone is interested in a special issue of Italian poets writing in English--which would be relevant to 50th Anniversary Convention's theme and could be useful for *MLS*.

C. Second Vice President's Report, Carole Salmon

1. The Summer Fellowship will have a new change: there will be less money per fellow, but this will open up the opportunity to fund more Summer Fellows
2. Second VP Salmon looks forward to seeing this year's Fellows present their posters at this year's convention
3. The 2020 convention will be in Boston. GSC Representative Nicole Lowman will check on options at Tufts.

D. Past President's Report, Hilda Chacon

1. Hilda announced the names of the winner and honorable mention for the Book Award.
2. Hilda thanks NeMLA for welcoming her, as well as Laurence for coordinating the special issue of *Modern Language Studies* in coordination with her year's convention theme, and Ben Railton leading into this year's theme.

E. *Modern Language Studies* Report, Laurence Roth

1. A new *MLS* podcast episode will be released soon with Richard Newman on his translation of Farid al-Din Attar's "The Tale of Marhuma."
2. We're trying to set up an event for *MLS* in Washington, DC, to coincide with the 50th Anniversary Convention.

VII. Language and Caucus Director Reports

A. American Area Report, John Casey

1. The number of sessions remain stable. Professor Casey reached out to people from the Pittsburgh area and has been pleased to see local networking initiatives.
2. We may need to adjust what the roundtable should be, as they tend to draw bigger audiences.
3. And we should encourage more seminars to allow more development of scholarship.
4. Professor Casey is happy to see secondary areas within America primary sessions, such as Russian and Italian.

5. Professor Casey reached out to MELUS to make a proposal or to get involved.
 6. He also would like to see more crossover with Spanish secondary area, especially given current events in this time period and in the Global South.
 7. Professor Casey thanks incoming 2nd VP So and ED Mardorossian for helping him when he first entered this position, and Ben Railton for recommending he self-nominate, especially as a full-time lecturer.
- B. British/Anglophone Report, Elaine Savory
1. Professor Savory cited schedule conflicts that had the session she is chairing at the same time as Helon Habila's talk. Discussion ensued about the database preventing such conflicts and double accounts from which they emerge. ED Madorossian will address it with the NeMLA programmers.
 2. Professor Savory echoed the sentiment to approach Howard University in 2019 to get more Caribbean studies involvement.
- C. Italian Area Report, Emanuela Pecchioli
1. Middle Ages and Renaissance were under-represented in proposals. Alexander Pichugin recommended contacting Rutgers University for more Renaissance scholars' submissions.
 2. There are many sessions on migration culture, which suits this year's convention theme.
- D. Spanish/Portuguese Area Report, Margarita Vargas
1. Professor Vargas is grateful for the new initiative to encourage graduate students to introduce Special Event speakers.
 2. Portuguese is under-represented this year.
 3. Professor Vargas echoed John Casey's desire for cross-area sessions between American and Spanish/Portuguese Areas.
- E. German Area Report, Alexander Pichugin
1. Professor Pichugin was not able to participate in the online Fall Board meeting due to technical limitations
 2. While he understands the limited number of rooms available at the Omni William Penn, he hopes this number can be larger for the 50th Anniversary Convention.
 3. Professor Pichugin discussed the need to increase Russian and Slavic submissions under the German Area. ED Mardorossian agreed. Other Board members add they see similar problems filling in gaps in their areas, such as Turkish and Portuguese studies. ED

Mardorossian advised proposing board-sponsored sessions to fill these gaps, then finding someone later to chair the session.

F. French Area Report, Claudia Esposito

1. The French Area has fewer sessions due to a convention in French studies also held recently in the Pittsburgh area.

G. Comparative Literature Area Report, Richard Schumaker

1. Professor Schumaker is proud to announce that the Comparative Literature Area has expanded to 30 sessions. Richard also mentioned that these sessions are attracting attention from college administrators who would like to recruit NeMLA presenters and staff to continue this work, and which means administrative interest can lead to 60 sessions soon.
2. Additional sessions are contributing to LGBTQ studies, subcontinent studies, and underrepresented topics.
3. He also emphasized the need to reach out to the State Department and other organizations due to international scholars who are not able to attend the convention.
4. Professor Schumaker made 5-minute videos on YouTube to promote speakers in Comparative Literature, and online feedback has been substantial.
5. He recommended a small reception for South Asian scholars at the 50th Anniversary Convention.

H. Cultural Studies Area Report, Lisa Perdigao

1. Lisa Perdigao reviewed the progress NeMLA has made since she was first a Women's and Gender Studies Caucus representative, in particular the shift to online content like the Dropbox account to organize NeMLA resources.
2. She is glad to see how this year's sessions speak to the convention's theme, and she has been happy to work with John Casey to coordinate topics and speakers
3. In light of SAMLA's own undergraduate research forum, Lisa suggested hosting one in NeMLA. Such a session would attract incoming graduate students. NeMLA could also consider offering membership to undergraduates. John Casey and Richard Schumaker mention similar programs and options for contacting people involved in such projects for assistance and advice. ED Mardorossian says the by-laws would have to be updated to confirm forums are open to undergrads.

I. Pedagogy/Professionalism Area Report, Angela Fulk

1. There were so many sessions in this area that received too few sessions and so many second session requests, so abstracts are being submitted to popular topics. Nevertheless, Professor Fulk is pleased with the variety of sessions offered, and many relate to current events and current politics.
 2. The Pedagogy/Professionalism session on academic publishing was upgraded to a special event.
- J. Women's and Gender Studies Area Report, Rachel Spear
1. Professor Spear reflected on her initial time with NeMLA as a graduate student and how the Women's and Gender Studies Caucus seeks a new Board Representative.
 2. The WGS Area met targets for number of sessions; however, many of those sessions lacked enough abstracts. Therefore, she reached to scholars to fill in those panels so they could run.
 3. The WGS Area also sponsored a roundtable.
 4. Professor Spear thanked Spanish/Portuguese Director Margarita Vargas, who is also a WGS Caucus officer, for securing the WGS speaker Janet Lyon.
 5. She added information not in the Board report, regarding additional outreach necessary to increase the number of submissions for the WGS Essay Award. Traditionally submissions are few, so WGSC officers will review how to revise deadlines and outreach to avoid working to the last minute to get more submissions.
 6. Professor Spear added that the WGS Mentorship Program is facing a problem of mentees backing out before coming to the convention, after mentors are already recruited. Please encourage mentees to take their obligation seriously.
 7. WGS also will have a Scavenger Hunt this year.
 8. Professor Spear concluded by asking Board members to pick up WGS Caucus ribbons for themselves before leaving and to seek nominations for open Caucus positions in Secretary and Social Media Manager.
- K. Diversity Report, Susmita Roye
1. Professor Roye discussed how she is developing a NeMLA panel on masculinity into a published volume, and how one attendee has had their presentation develop into a published article.
 2. The Caribbean Essay Award has few submissions even after a one-month extension. Discussion began whether to expand the award into a Global Anglophone Essay Award.

- a) Elaine Savory added that Caribbean studies were more represented in previous years of NeMLA. ED Mardorossian suggested another name, the Postcolonial Essay Award. Hilda Chicon suggested a Global South Essay Award.
 - b) ED Mardorossian added that, if you see a lot of popularity in your area on a particular topic or methodology, consider developing an essay contests. Lisa Perdigao also suggested choosing a new topic each year for a different essay award.
 - 3. Speaking of Essay Awards, ED Mardorossian asked Board members to contact the following about finding volunteers to read and judge the following: incoming Second VP So for Summer Fellows, and President DiFrancesco for the Book Award.
 - L. Graduate Student Caucus Report, Nicole Lowman
 - 1. GSC will move up the deadline for the Travel Award to have more time to review submissions, and if these applicants can know their funding is assured, they are more likely to register on time or at all.
 - 2. There are multiple tiers for awards, so we may create a lower tier covering just registration costs.
 - 3. An alt-academic panel for Pittsburgh 2018 had too few submissions, perhaps because alt-ac people do not seek academic conventions. GSC will host this session again for the 50th Anniversary Convention and will promote the CFP at non-academic avenues.
 - 4. GSC will speak at its evening meeting to see whether Howard University can set up sessions for the 50th Anniversary Convention.
 - M. CAITY Caucus, Katelynn DeLuca
 - 1. Sarah Goldbort has streamlined the review process of Travel Award applications.
 - 2. CAITY is working to overcome its lower visibility compared to other caucuses.
 - 3. As well, CAITY has had fewer submissions for its Essay Award than previous years.
 - 4.
- VIII. Other Business
- A. Elaine Savory discussed the need to make it clearer which session types NeMLA offers. Incoming 2nd VP So suggested describing the session types on Ballast / CFP List where people submit their session proposals. John Casey added the web site explaining session types can be included in emails to instruct how to submit proposals. ED Mardorossian added

Board Directors can write emails to their members to send themselves or have NeMLA Staff send.

- B. Rachel Spear asked that Board members reach out to junior faculty and new PhD recipients in order to introduce our Special Event speakers.
 - C. VP Wright recommended recognizing new NeMLA Board members.
- IX. Meeting was adjourned at 11:15 AM.