

Call for Papers and Proposals
42nd Meeting of the Society for Utopian Studies
CFP Deadline: August 15, 2017

*Conference Theme: Utopian Gracelands, Dystopian Blues, and
the City on the Bluff*

When: Nov 9-12, 2017

Where: Doubletree By Hilton Memphis Downtown, 185 Union Avenue, Memphis, TN

The Society for Utopian Studies is pleased to be meeting once again in Memphis, Tennessee, and invites you to submit papers and proposals on the theme, “Utopian Gracelands, Dystopian Blues, and the City on the Bluff.” As an interdisciplinary society from its founding, we encourage scholars and practitioners from any academic field to join and participate, as well as architects, city planners, artists, musicians—anyone whose work relates to utopian thought and possibility, and dystopian realities and visions. Members of intentional communities are also welcome to attend and/or to present.

Abstracts and proposals of up to 250 words are due by **15 August 2017** for the following:

- a 15-20 minute individual paper;
- a full panel of up to four speakers, or an informal roundtable of 3-6 presenters (encouraged!);
- a performance of a creative work or presentation of an artwork or artifact;
- a visual/audio presentation in the form of a poster and/or demo.

As we do every year, the Society invites papers on **any** topic related to the literature, history and theory of utopia in literature and practice. This broad umbrella covers dystopia, science fiction, speculative fiction, communal experiments and failures, film representations of any of the above.

However, we especially welcome proposals related to our place-based conference theme: *Utopian Gracelands, Dystopian Blues, and the City on the Bluff*. The City of Memphis is famous for many things: its role in “King Cotton” and the slave trade; its role in the Civil Rights Movement; its music of blues, soul, and jazz; its barbecue and catfish; and, of course, its river. Within walking distance of the Doubletree Downtown, you can visit iconic sites representing each of these: The National Civil Rights Museum; Beale Street, Sun Studios, and (a short drive from downtown) Elvis Presley’s home, Graceland; the Rendezvous for barbecue; and you can’t really miss the “mighty” Mississippi River.

Less well known is the history of indigenous peoples from the Quapaw and Chickasaw Nations, who inhabited the area now known as Memphis on the Mississippi River bluffs, and forced to leave during the Indian Removals of the 1800s. Burial mounds are still visible within the city limits. (Other Tennessee tribes include the Shawnee, Yuchi, Cherokee, and Koasati).

Memphis also claims its fame as the home of FedEx, and of America’s first supermarket chain, Piggly Wiggly. Memphis history thus provides a wide variety of possible approaches and topics related to utopian and dystopian thought and practice. We particularly invite papers related to any aspect of the following:

- **Civil Rights and Utopian Political Movements:** the history of utopian politics and political movement in Memphis and the South; “the Promised Land”
- **Indigenous Communities: Utopia and Dystopia, Before and After the European Arrival**

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- **Global Memphis:** from riverboats to vapor trails; transnational exchanges (of cotton, slaves, culture, and packages)
- **The Mississippi River in Song and Literature**
- **The Memphis Sound and the History of Contemporary Music**
- **African American Literatures and Histories**
- **Southern Intentional Communities**
- **Indigenous Literatures and Histories**
- **Graceland:** Elvis Presley and/or his famous home; but also the concept of grace, and its relation to utopian thinking or thematics. Another possible related topic: **Celebrity**
- **Supermarkets and Consumer Utopias**

As noted above, non-theme related papers are always accepted! Recent themes of interest at our meetings have included:

- **Science/Speculative Fictions** from around the world
- **Digital Humanities**—given the longevity of Utopia and its many imitators, what forms of technology showcase this texts or other imagined or real-world utopias?
- **Teaching**—pedagogical issues in teaching Utopia and similar works of utopian fiction, teaching dystopian works, theories of teaching speculative fiction
- **Artwork**—presentations or displays of art and/or analyses of utopian themes in the works of Memphis or Southern artists

****DEADLINE: 15 August 2017 for 250-word abstracts and proposals****

Please use our online forms for submissions by clicking on *Submit A Proposal* on our conference website, <http://utopian-studies.org/conference2017>.

For information about registration, travel or accommodations, please contact **Jennifer Wagner-Lawlor** at jaw55@psu.edu; for information about panel topics, assistance finding co-panelists, and other questions about the conference program, please contact **Andrew Byers** or **Elizabeth Schreiber-Byers** at sus2017conference@gmail.com. Those looking for co-panelists are reminded that H-Utopia (<https://networks.h-net.org/h-utopia>) offers a platform for sending out panel CFPs.

And for information on restaurants, local maps, transportation, and other information about the Memphis area, visit <http://www.memphistravel.com/>.

AND DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE SOCIETY'S AWARDS. Nominate yourself, or someone else, as appropriate!

Eugenio Battisti Award – for the best article in *Utopian Studies* (journal) during 2016

Kenneth M. Roemer Innovative Course Design Award – for creative course modules or syllabi.
Deadline: Sept 15, 2017

Larry E. Hough Distinguished Service Award – for service to the Society

Lyman Tower Sargent Award for Distinguished Scholarship – for lifetime achievement in the field of Utopian Studies