

Constitution and By-Laws of The Society for the Study of the Multiethnic Literature of the United States

As Adopted on 1 May 2004; revised in November 2008; revised 2015; revised 2018; revised 2022 and ratified by membership January 2023

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this Society shall be THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE MULTIETHNIC LITERATURE OF THE UNITED STATES, hereafter referred to as MELUS. The Society shall be incorporated and maintained as a non-profit organization.

ARTICLE II

Purpose of the Society

Section 1. MELUS is an anti-racist organization for all people who are professionally interested in expanding the definitions of American literature. We seek to study all forms of this pluralistic literature, in all the languages of every culture, from pre-Columbian times to the present. MELUS is a forum for research and the dissemination of this research globally, through the *MELUS* journal, MELUS website, MELUS-approved social media outlets, an annual national conference to heighten cultural awareness and diversity, as well as through books, articles and publications, panels, and professional meetings deemed appropriate by the members of the Society. The Executive Committee shall review all proposals to expand MELUS internationally to determine if these international groups are financially viable and willing to abide by the MELUS Constitution. No international organization may use the MELUS name without meeting these criteria.

Section 2. We recognize the importance of ethnic identity and cultures and the necessity of making both cultural and aesthetic judgments in regard to all literature, including the diversity that is recognized as literature of the US; i.e., the literature of various ethnic, racialized, Indigenous, ethnically-specific Euro-Americans, and other religious and cultural groups that have been historically oppressed. The Society endeavors to provide a more-balanced appreciation of the scholarly expertise of the people, cultures, and literatures that comprise the United States.

Section 3. We intend to recover forgotten literature, much of it written in languages other than English, which is now deposited in libraries and archives and private collections of historical societies and social organizations.

Section 4. We propose to study the ethnic and racialized component in all literature of the US and address historically canonical writers' reactions to or concerns with race and ethnicity. We propose to interrogate the concept of whiteness, examine the interdependence of and dialogue among writers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds, and explore the ways in which the study of multiethnic literature remains interdependent with conversations about canon formation.

Section 5. To realize these purposes MELUS will organize and conduct public meetings, seminars, and conferences throughout the United States and the world. We will cooperate with

other scholars and organizations to coordinate research, sponsor area and joint meetings, bibliographies, and other appropriate publications.

Section 6. No substantial part of the activities of the Society shall be for the carrying on of propaganda, nor shall the Society participate as an organization in or intervene in any political campaign of any candidate for public office. MELUS may take public stands on issues and legislation of educational and intellectual significance related to our mission.

Section 7: The Society is organized and shall be operated exclusively for such charitable, scientific, literary or educational purposes as the Executive Committee may approve and as are within the purposes herein expressed. The Society is not organized for pecuniary profit, and shall not engage in any activities for any pecuniary profit and no officer, member or employee of the Society shall receive any pecuniary profit from the operations thereof except repayment of expenses reasonably incurred in effecting or carrying out one or more of its activities. No part of any net earnings of the Society shall inure to the benefit of any member or individual.

ARTICLE III

Membership

Members

Section 1. The membership consists of individuals and institutions who have paid yearly dues as specified by the Executive Committee, through subscribing to the *MELUS* journal via the publisher's portal or other mechanisms implemented when necessary. Membership is maintained by payment of a subsequent annual subscription that is used to support the services provided to the members of the Society. An individual member has full voting privileges. Institutions, however, have no voting privilege. Should the Society designate some individuals as non-dues-paying (i.e., as honorary), they shall not vote.

Section 2. Payment of yearly dues entitles the member to receive the journal, to join any online membership discussion groups or mailing lists, and to present at the annual conference. Each member is also entitled to participate and vote in any election and participate in any conference or business meeting organized by MELUS, subject to any applicable registration fees.

Section 3. For purposes of communication, email is the official means between MELUS leadership and membership, although announcements will also be disseminated on the MELUS website and various social media platforms. Currently, membership lists are generated by the journal publisher, and, therefore, members/subscribers are encouraged to keep their information up-to-date within the publisher's subscriber portal.

ARTICLE IV

Officers:

Section 1. The Executive Committee shall consist of a President, a Vice President, a Secretary, a Treasurer, the Editor of the *MELUS* journal, a Membership and Media Chair, the Project Chair, the Graduate Student Representative, and the Coordinator of the Women of Color Caucus (*ex officio*). This Committee is responsible for the operation of the Society, subject to review by the entire membership at the annual meeting.

Section 2. All officers of the Executive Committee (with the exception of the Editor of the Journal), are elected for a term of three years. They are eligible for re-election to the same office once, with the exception of the Treasurer, who has no limitations on renewal of appointment. The Journal Editor receives five-year appointments from the Executive Committee, with no limitations on renewal of appointment. The Women of Color Caucus will select its own representative to the Executive Committee each year. Should a vacancy of any office occur, the position may be filled temporarily by appointment of another officer of the Executive Committee until the next election or a special election can be arranged.

Section 3. The Executive Committee may appoint *ex officio* members as situations warrant.

Section 4. The Executive Committee shall report on the year's activities at the annual meeting and each officer shall provide a written report in June of each year through the file sharing system chosen by the officers.

ARTICLE V

Publications of MELUS

Section 1. All publications of MELUS (whether or not financed by MELUS) shall be directed by an Editorial Board consisting of the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal and two appointees. Subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, the Editorial Board can form committees designed to create, promote, and sponsor various publications (monographs, etc.), in appropriate cases, nominating to the Executive Committee special editors for newly created publications.

Section 2. The contents of the MELUS website will be determined by the the Membership and Media Chair in consultation with the MELUS President and the necessary or appropriate Executive Committee officers. Any periodic mailings to membership on behalf of the society will be developed through the collaboration of the entire Executive Committee.

ARTICLE VI

Meetings

Section 1. MELUS will meet at least once a year for the transaction of business by the membership. The meetings will take place at the annual MELUS Conference. Usually, the Executive Committee will also meet at the annual Modern Language Association Convention, and at other times as necessary. The President of the Executive Committee/MELUS will designate the place and time.

Section 2. Voting by proxy shall be allowed. Such votes can be brought to the Executive Committee by any of the officers of the Society.

Section 3. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern meetings, unless a majority determines that an alternative procedure is preferable.

ARTICLE VII

Amendments and Ratification

Section 1. Any two (2) members of the Executive Committee or any five (5) Society members may petition that the Constitution be amended. With the support of the majority of the Executive

Committee (polled by email), the Amendment will be submitted to the entire membership. The vote will be conducted and emailed with a designated date posted for submission of ballots. The majority vote will rule. Should the Executive Committee not approve a submitted Amendment, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the attending members of the business meeting can force submission of the Amendment to the entire membership. The majority of those voting will rule.

ARTICLE VIII

Effective Date of this MELUS Constitution

Section 1. This Constitution shall be effective after approval by a majority of the voting membership. Voting shall be conducted electronically with a designated date for return of ballots, and the results shall be disclosed at the next business meeting.

Article IX

Dissolution and Termination

Section 1. Upon termination and dissolution of this association the Officers shall proceed to wind up affairs of the association in accordance with the laws of the state in which the current non-profit status has been filed or renewed in such case provided, paying all bills and debts of the association, and distributing remaining assets, if any, to such similar non-profit, tax-exempt, charitable, or educational institution as the Officers shall in their best discretion deem advisable, which charitable or educational institution shall be an organization included in the provisions of Section 501(c)(3), 1954 Internal Revenue Code as amended from time to time. Upon dissolution and termination, no monies or profits whatsoever shall be paid to any officer or any other person except for compensation for services rendered or verified out-of-pocket expenses.

BY-LAWS

Article I

Membership Dues

Section 1. Annual dues will be established by the Executive Committee and based on the expenses of the Society and its different types of memberships (i. e. institutions, international members, retirees, and such), in conjunction with the costs of publication as set out by the *MELUS* journal's publisher. Membership begins January 1 of each year. Payment of dues shall allow the member to receive the journal and any other publication designated by the Executive Committee for distribution to the entire membership.

Patrons

Section 1. Individuals and institutions (such as colleges, universities, academic departments and programs, other organizations, or individuals) may serve as patrons by making donations or annual contributions at a rate determined by the Executive Committee.

Article II

Change of Status

Section 1. If a member resigns during the year, that member's dues are forfeited. Any members not paying dues one year after a renewal notice shall cease to be members in good standing and shall be duly notified.

Keeping Informed

Section 1.

Currently, the Society operates without a paid staff or office and depends on volunteer time and labor. While the Society will make every effort to keep accurate membership records, members should also take personal responsibility for keeping the Society informed of changes of address and other information vital to keeping in contact with the organization by updating their information in the journal publisher's member portal and with the Society's Secretary to ensure updates to mailing list rolls.

ARTICLE III

Election of Officers

Section 1. The election of officers takes place every three years. In the third year of any term, no later than the **1st of October**, the Executive Committee will appoint an Election Committee of two or three—one of whom preferably is someone who has served on the Executive Committee but is not actively seeking election in that year—to take charge of all facets of the election process including recruitment of a slate of candidates, creation of the ballot, distribution of said ballot, and counting the votes. The members of the Election Committee must be MELUS members in good standing, and they will choose a chair among themselves. Members of the Executive Committee will share joint responsibility in dispensing the call for nominations and encouraging qualified candidates to run for officer positions.

Section 2. The election committee will announce the call for nominations, including job descriptions of each position, on the MELUS email distribution system or platforms, the website, and among the members more generally. The Elections Committee, in consultation with the Secretary, will make formal determination of what specific media will be used to communicate with membership.

Section 3. All MELUS members in good standing are eligible for nomination to any position. Graduate students are encouraged to run for Graduate Student Representative with the understanding that the representative should have graduate student status for the majority of the three-year term.

Section 4. Those who have not been self-nominated will be contacted by the Election Committee to ensure that they are willing to run for office. Those nominating themselves or others will submit their curriculum vitae and a brief description of their experiences related to their desired position as well as any vision they have for the office they would like to hold.

Section 5. The Election Committee has the power to invalidate nominations if the candidate is not a member of MELUS in good standing or if the nominee has not attended MELUS meetings in recent years.

Section 6. The Election Committee will generate a ballot from these nominations, preferably with at least two candidates per office by **December 1**. The ballot should include each candidate's name, position, and candidate's statement. The Election Committee will make the ballots accessible by electronic means to all MELUS members in good standing as of November 1.

Members should vote and submit their ballots no later than **December 31**. The Committee will count the ballots and report the complete results to the Executive Committee and the Membership by **February** of the next calendar year. When warranted by extenuating circumstances, the President has the power to alter the election timeline or extend deadlines after consulting with the executive and election committees.

Section 7. The Election Committee can invalidate any ballot submitted by non members.

Section 8. The candidate with a simple majority will be declared the winner for each position. In case of a tie, the Election Committee will arrange another election between the tied candidates within a week after announcing the general election results. MELUS members will vote and submit their ballots to break this tie **within one month of distribution of the new ballot**.

Section 9. The newly elected officers will be introduced at the annual conference.

ARTICLE IV

Duties of MELUS Officers

Section 1. In addition to duties defined in the Constitution, the officers shall perform the duties traditionally associated with their various offices. All members of the Executive Committee shall be actively involved in the operation of the organization and will communicate with one another regularly. They will be polled in order to prepare the agenda for the annual meeting.

Section 2. If an officer is determined to be derelict in duty, they may be removed from that office by majority vote of the Executive Committee and replaced through consensus appointment by the Executive Committee, or through the next election, or special election.

Section 3. The President shall chair meetings of the Society and coordinate all of the functions of the Society. They shall administer the Constitution and By-Laws throughout the year. With the elected members of the Executive Committee, the President appoints all non-elected officers, reviews significant expenditures, and shall make arrangements for annual conferences and, in collaboration with the Vice President, consult with local hosts on the planning of conferences, as well as national and regional meetings, publications, etc. The President takes ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the Society's programs and activities and leads the conversation regarding our field of study.

Section 4. The Vice President assists with coordination of the annual program, including the national MELUS conference and sessions at other affiliate regional and national conferences. The Vice President directs preparations for the annual national MELUS Conference in consultation with the President, Executive Committee and local organizers. Once the MELUS President has secured a contract with a university that specifies the responsibilities of the campus and the Society, the Vice President or a designate serves as a resource person for the campus coordinator, who is expected to follow the guidelines outlined in the MELUS Conference Handbook. The Vice President shall develop procedures for future projects and programs. In the event that the President is unable to serve, the Vice President will serve in the role until the President is able to return or until the next election/special election takes place.

Section 5. The Secretary shall coordinate with the President to set the agenda and keep minutes of the Executive Committee and membership meetings and shall distribute copies to the

Executive Committee before each meeting. The Secretary will also assist with various organizational tasks as needed and maintain a mailing list of active Society members. In conjunction with the President, the Secretary will also notify the Executive Committee of the time and place of its annual meeting. This officer is involved with communicating internally and externally the activities and policies of the Society, whether in newsletter or other form.

Section 6. The Membership and Media Chair is charged with all responsibilities and duties related to the recruitment and retention of members. Primary among these duties is to maintain MELUS social media and the MELUS website, keep a MELUS membership database up to date using information provided by the Secretary and the journal's publisher, and to make that information available as deemed necessary by the Membership and Media Chair and Executive Committee. The Membership and Media Chair is also responsible for developing a plan for increasing and maintaining membership.

Section 7. The Treasurer shall establish and maintain a careful bookkeeping system in accordance with the requirements put forth by the non-profit corporation laws. The Treasurer reports regularly to the Executive Committee about such matters as the percentage of dues which goes to the journal, regular payments to the journal, and regular financial statements received from the journal's publisher, which the Treasurer incorporates into the annual financial report. This officer also works with the Executive Committee on basic financial operations, such as designing a yearly budget, fulfilling contractual obligations, filing IRS documents, managing investments, making and receiving payments, and receiving and keeping track of all MELUS funds, including membership and conference registration fees. This officer works closely with the local conference committees and the other members of the Executive Board related to the organization's resources.

Section 8. The Editor-in-Chief of the *MELUS* journal is appointed by the MELUS President, in conjunction with the elected members of the Executive Committee. The Editor is a voting member of the Executive Committee. The *MELUS* Editor shall receive manuscripts for publication consideration, and members of the Editorial Board will evaluate and referee submissions to the journal. Work recommended for publication will be edited and prepared for dissemination by the Editor and the *MELUS* editorial staff. The editor and the editorial staff shall keep timely and useful records of submissions and on-going discussions with authors and scholars. The Editor-in-Chief should also keep up-to-date on membership rolls through the publishing partners and Secretary.

Section 9. The Project Chair serves as Executive Committee liaison to the various ongoing projects that the organization may undertake through *ad hoc* committees and subcommittees. This officer is responsible for executing special projects the Executive Committee may deem necessary to pursue for the benefit of the organization at large. At the beginning or the three-year term, the Project Chair, along with the Executive Committee, will establish a work plan to cover the most pressing projects. The Project Chair must report to the Executive Committee on the status of said projects. The Project Chair is also responsible for convening an awards committee to judge the annual Best Essay Award from the journal's full annual volume of the preceding year. The judging committee must include three active members of the Society, including previous winners and established scholars representing a variety of the Society's specialty areas.

Section 10. The Graduate Student Representative helps the Society address the specific needs and concerns of MELUS members who are currently graduate students and shall communicate these to the Executive Committee. It is preferred that the Graduate Student Representative has graduate student status for the majority of the three-year term. The Graduate Student Representative's duties include organizing a selection committee for the annual conference travel awards, to be comprised of at least one member of the local conference hosting committee and one member of the Executive Committee; and to organize a roundtable on professional issues of interest to graduate students for each annual conference.

Section 11. Coordinator of the Women of Color Caucus shall serve an *ex officio* role on the Executive Committee, to ensure communication with the Executive Committee of the specific needs and concerns of the caucus members. The Coordinator shall be chosen by the members of the caucus each year and additional duties of the Coordinator regarding caucus business is to be determined from within the group, not by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will ensure that the local annual conference host guarantees at least one panel or roundtable session to the Women of Color Caucus.

Section 12. All records of the Executive Committee's activities shall be kept in an online, file sharing system, to which all current officers have access. Working document and recent archives are kept in the cloud, and documents may be provided to MELUS members upon request.

ARTICLE V

Prohibition on Officers

Section 1. No committee person or other officer of the Society shall (a) receive, directly or indirectly, any salary, compensation or emolument from the Society, either as such officer or committee member or in any capacity, unless authorized by the By-Laws and by the concurring vote of two-thirds of all the Members, or (b) be interested, directly or indirectly, in any contract for furnishing supplies thereto, unless authorized by the By-Laws or by the concurring vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the committee persons.

ARTICLE VI

Meetings

Section 1. At the annual business meeting a quorum shall consist of a majority of the Executive Committee, at least one being the President an officially designated replacement. Other meetings may be called by the Executive Committee (regional, joint, etc.) and committees may be created to meet the particular needs of such meetings.

ARTICLE VII

Amendments

Section 1. These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of members in good standing. Any member may propose an amendment and submit it to the Executive Committee, where it must be approved by a majority. The Executive Committee will be polled. Written notice of the proposed amendment must be mailed by the Secretary to each member at least two (2) months before the annual meeting. Results of the voting will be announced at the annual meeting, with a two-thirds (2/3) vote of eligible members required for passage.

Article VIII

MELUS Awards

Section 1. The Executive Committee may confer a Distinguished Contribution to Ethnic Studies or Lifetime Achievement award to scholars and faculty members who have made significant contributions to the field of multiethnic studies and/or to the MELUS organization. The Executive Committee may also present travel awards to graduate students and contingent faculty at the annual conference as funds permit.

Section 2. Executive Committee may also confer one or more awards for the best articles published within the journal *MELUS* annual volumes.

Article IX

MELUS Presidential Advisory Council (MPAC)

Section 1. The MELUS Presidential Advisory Council shall be comprised of ALL former presidents of MELUS.

Section 2. The MELUS Presidential Advisory Council will operate solely in an advisory capacity at the request of the MELUS President or the MELUS Executive Committee as a body. MPAC also will be authorized to meet at the annual MELUS conference upon the request of a member of the Council, who can organize a meeting of the members when four or more MPAC members will be in attendance at the conference. MPAC activities ordinarily will not be funded by MELUS. Any exceptions for funding must receive approval from the MELUS Executive Committee as a body.

Section 3. The MPAC may advise the Executive Committee regarding past practices, including successes and complications, yet will not be involved in deciding any aspect of the following: conferences, journal, awards, award recipients, ALA or MLA panels, financial decisions, or any of the routine business decisions of the MELUS Executive Committee. MPAC will serve as a resource to the Executive Committee by request of the President or the MELUS Executive Committee as a body. The MELUS Executive Committee will retain its autonomy in all decisions it is constitutionally designated to make and duties it is designated to perform.

Section 4. With the agreement of at least four members of the Presidential Advisory Council, MPAC may present in writing critical concerns about MELUS and/or its publications to the MELUS Executive Committee for its consideration.