

49th Annual Appalachian Studies Conference  
Appalachia: Power of the place, Power of its People  
March 19-21, 2026  
Marshall University, Huntington, West Virginia

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**Guidelines for Conveners and Moderators**

All sessions are one hour and fifteen minutes. Please introduce yourself to speakers and let them know how the session will proceed. Ask if they have already agreed to time limits for their speaking terms. If they have, plan to keep track of those limits and give them notice when they are nearing the end of their speaking time, if necessary. If they have not agreed to set speaking times, let them know the time available, leaving at least 10-15 minutes for discussion at the end and dividing speaking time evenly among presenters. Limit speakers to allotted time and leave enough time at the end of each session for questions and answers. If a speaking panel has a planned alternative to this arrangement, you may defer to them.

When you open the session, provide an orienting set of comments on the topics and either introduce each speaker or indicate they will introduce themselves, whatever is the preference. Let the audience know to hold questions and comments until the end.

**Suggestions for conveners and moderators:**

1. PRODUCTIVE FACILITATION

The best facilitators are aware of the audience's time and interest in the topics covered in the session. They are also cognizant and responsive to their presenters. To that end, the facilitator should:

- Be in or near the room 10-15 minutes before the session starts.
- Be familiar with the available technology or how to get help if needed.
- Greet the presenters and ensure that their technical needs are met, and remind them of the following:
  - **All** presenters are required to register and pay. If they have not yet done so, they may visit the registration desk after the session.
  - Individual papers should not exceed 15 minutes presentation time;
  - Questions and answers will be deferred until the end;
  - You will signal each speaker when two minutes are left so they may wrap up;
  - After all speakers have finished, you will call for questions and answers and you will end the session on time by signifying the last question.
- **Please ask presenters to sign in on the attached session information sheet.**
- Please welcome audience, introduce speakers, and begin and end your session on time. Since there are only 15 minutes between sessions, ending on time is essential so that presenters for the next session have adequate time to set up and conference

attendees can arrive at their next session before it starts.

- Start and end the session on time.
- Keep strict adherence to time limits for each presenter—if someone is going over, politely intervene by reminding them they have X minutes and should wrap up to allow the next speaker their allotted time.
- Facilitate the Q&A actively. If there are no questions, have one or two planned that you have gathered during your listening to the session.
- Ending the session:
  - Please thank speakers and audience for participating. Lead the audience in applause to end session.
  - Please sign attendance sheets for professional development units for teachers.
  - Please take a head count of the audience and mark approximate attendance on the session information sheet. Please also note any concerns or suggestions.
  - If chairs are rearranged for a session, the convener should ensure that the chairs are put back in place before the next session.
  - Please turn in the attached session information sheet to Information Desk at the Memorial Student Center. Be sure to note any technical difficulties that needed to be managed and indicate whether they were fixed permanently.

## 2. TIPS FOR MANAGING CONFLICT AND TACKLING DIFFICULT ISSUES

If the Conference Planning Committee feels that there may be controversy surrounding a particular topic area, they will make you aware of this ahead of time and, if necessary, a Conference Committee member will be in the room to assist with facilitation. If you are uncomfortable facilitating an assigned sessions, please inform the Program Chairs as soon as possible and we will find someone to fill in for you.

Sometimes, however, controversy arises unexpectedly. Here are some suggestions for managing spirited discussions around high energy topics:

Facilitator: Open the session with a statement such as, *There may be some topics discussed in this session that can lead to passionate responses. We want to have an open, respectful, and productive conversation so we will hold all comments and questions until the end of the presentations.*

At the end of the presentations, start questions and comments with something along the lines of the following:

*As we begin our conversation time, let's agree to some ground rules. Please be respectful to others in terms of being efficient with questions and comments. Remember*

*everyone deserves to be heard. Please direct any comments or critical statements toward the topic rather than towards an individual. Please voice your concerns and points productively and stay focused on the issues.*

If a session becomes tense or unproductive, facilitators can take the following steps:

- Stop the conversation and remind everyone of the ground rules, garner agreement on the ground rules to proceed.
- If there is not agreement on the ground rules, you should not be afraid to stop the session and explain that you feel uncomfortable managing the conflict—this takes skill and experience. Do not ask specific people to leave or stop their behavior, explain that the session is no longer productive, apologize to the presenters and other audience members, and end the session. In this case, the facilitator can make the following statement:
  - *Thank you for attending this session. At this point, it appears that we have some strong feelings that may not be productive to discuss as a formal group, so I am going to end the session. I hope you will join me in thanking the presenters either as a group or individually for their preparation for today. I encourage you to continue this conversation in any way you see fit.*

**For questions, contact: Paul Robertson robertsonp@marshall.edu or Marianna Linz Linz@marshall.edu**

**If you need assistance with a tense or unproductive session, contact:**

- **Sophia Enriquez, ASA President, 513-515-0230**
- **Cicero M. Fain, III, Conference Chair, 614-886-9925**
- **Paul Robertson, Program Co-Chair, 828-773-3747**
- **Marianna Linz, Program Co-Chair, 304 412 4237**