

Submit a Paper Proposal

The Faces of Depression in Literature

Organizer: Prof. Dr. Josefa Ros Velasco (Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, Harvard University)

The NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health) defines depression as a common but serious mood disorder that causes severe symptoms (asthenia, anhedonia, abulia, among many others) that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. The cause is believed to be a combination of genetic, environmental, and psychological factors and affects approximately 216 million people (3% of the world's population) mostly ranged from 20 to 30 years old. Nowadays, depression is also known for its many synonyms: clinical depression, MDD (Major Depressive Disorder), unipolar depression, unipolar disorder, depressive episode, and recurrent depressive disorder, to name a few. However, literary expressions gather the many names and faces that shaped this widespread and well-known disorder throughout history, especially when mental health treatises were scarce. Thus, it is common to find the background of modern depression linked to concepts such as the Greeks *agritude* (ἄλιψη, *agritudo*) and black bile (μέλαινα χολή, *melaina chole*), the Latin *acedia* and *taedium vitae*, the Renaissance *tristitia* and *melancholia*, as well as the modern *ennui*, *spleen*, *mal de vivre*, *nausée*, *noia*, *Weltschmerz*... all of which have been present in the literary works of all times.

This seminar attempts to bring together specialists and scholars in the topic from a multidisciplinary approach to explore the many literary expressions of depression over time and discuss about their approximations to current, clinical understanding of MDD, i.e., their similarities and differences, taking into account the environmental and psychological factors on which such a mental disorder depends in each historical period. Our goal is to clarify the background of depression by paying attention to its representation through literature and revalue literature itself as a means of acquiring knowledge in an interdisciplinary way.



Current ACLA guidelines specify that each ACLA member* may submit only ONE PAPER for consideration. Individuals interested in participating in this seminar are encouraged to be in touch with the organizer over the summer; paper submissions through the portal will open **Sept. 1 and close Sept. 21**. Seminar organizer will review all submitted papers and propose their rosters by October 5th.

* If your proposal is accepted, you must become an ACLA member (\$45-195 USD, depending on your current salary) and register for the Annual Meeting (\$35-195 USD, depending on your academic status) to present your paper and receive a certificate. However, you can apply for a very easy to get Travel Grant of \$200 USD.

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<https://www.acla.org/faces-depression-literature>

Annual Meeting

The American Comparative Literature Association's 2019 Annual Meeting will take place at Georgetown University in Washington, DC, March 7th-10th, 2019.

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