

Loss and Melancholy in Early Modern Europe (Chicago, 29-31 Oct 26)

Sixteenth Century Society, Chicago, Oct 29–31, 2026

Deadline: Apr 10, 2026

Hayley Cotter

Loss and Melancholy in Early Modern Europe (Sixteenth Century Society).

This panel seeks papers that explore the early modern relationship between loss and melancholy for the Sixteenth Century Society Conference to be held in Chicago, 29-31 October 2026. In his *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Robert Burton writes, “Now go and brag of thy present happiness... thou seest in what a brittle state thou art, how soon thou mayst be dejected... by bad diet, bad air, a small loss, a little sorrow or discontent.” Bereavement permeates the early modern landscape, appearing in paintings, prints, poems, plays, ego documents, and legal testimony, among many other sources. It may involve the loss of love, friends, honor, possessions, homeland, freedom, political stability, or even religious conviction. Melancholy may follow, but not always. Why? Although modern psychology has sought to answer this question by interpreting melancholy through the framework of depression and pathologized grief, such approaches risk anachronism. How might early modern textual, visual, and cultural evidence illuminate the relationship between loss and melancholy on its own temporal terms?

Papers may address any aspect of grief, loss, mourning, and melancholy in early modern contexts. Please send a paper abstract (250 words maximum) and a short bio (100 words) to Hayley Cotter (hcotter@umass.edu) by April 10, 2026. Decisions will be communicated by April 13, 2026.

Please note that the submission of a proposal constitutes a commitment to in-person attendance. Presenters must hold membership in the Sixteenth Century Society by the time of the conference.

Reference:

CFP: Loss and Melancholy in Early Modern Europe (Chicago, 29-31 Oct 26). In: ArtHist.net, Mar 11, 2026 (accessed Apr 29, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/51934>>.