Session at NCSA (Philadelphia, 11-13 Mar 27)

48th Annual Conference of the Nineteenth-Century Studies Association, Philadelphia, PA, Mar 11–13, 2027
Deadline: Oct 20, 2026

Maura Coughlin

Picturing Species Sympathies.

Well before the concept of posthumanism was introduced, visual culture provided a fruitful arena for interrogating what it meant to be human and to share the world with other-than-human beings. Representations of nineteenth-century animals sometimes positioned the latter as parallel beings who shared human behavior, morals, values, preferences or beliefs. Through these pictured relations, artists both questioned and reaffirmed the presumed centrality of humanity across traditional and emerging disciplines as they probed the boundaries of what defined the human.
Our panel of 15-minute papers will explore 19th-century understandings of human and more-than-human realms during a time when the notion of human exceptionalism was increasingly scrutinized. We invite presentations that track (among other things) relations with companion species; kinship networks and care ethics; panics over Darwinian violations of human/animal boundaries; changing beliefs about monsters and hybrids; the dynamics between charismatic predators and prey; the maintenance and representation of sacred animals; platypuses; the “improvement” or regulation of behavior in domesticated and non-domesticated species; the roles of beasts of burden and other working animals; the discovery of species purportedly ‘new’ to the scientific community; and the means of visualizing evolutionary change. Speakers may focus on paintings, sculptures, taxidermy, posters, book illustrations, graphs, charts and data visualizations within animal husbandry manuals (and/or any other forms of visual and material culture).

No later than October 20, 2026 please send your title, 250-word abstract and short CV directly to
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and
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This will be a panel for the 48th annual conference of the Nineteenth-Century Studies Association, “Framing the Human in the Nineteenth Century.”

Reference:
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