**Southern States Communication Association**

**95th Annual Convention | “Anchors and Anchoring Communication”**

**April 2-6, 2025 | Norfolk, VA**

**Freedom of Speech Division  
Vice-Chair & Program Planner:** John Banister,[**jp.banister@gmail.com**](mailto:jp.banister@gmail.com)

The Freedom of Speech Division of SSCA invites paper and panel proposals for competitive selection at the 95th annual convention held in Norfolk, Virginia.

The division welcomes papers and panel proposals that address our understanding of freedom of speech and the First Amendment in contemporary society. The division invites scholarship that is interdisciplinary and that may utilize rhetorical, historical, empirical, or legal approaches to the study and application of free speech in society.

The theme for the 2025 convention is “Anchors and Anchoring Communication” in honor of Norfolk’s naval history. The right to freedom of speech has long anchored for communication a central role in the maintenance of democracy. The earliest democracies in Greece relied on the twin ideals of *Isēgoría* (equality of individuals when speaking before the assembly) and *Parrhēsia* (uninhibited speech, including the ability to ‘speak truth to power’). Later iterations of these principles were codified in the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The division is especially interested in submissions that consider the complicated history and contemporary applications of free speech protections, from Greek cultural norms to the contemporary First Amendment controversies.

The convention’s location this year provides an opportunity to (re)consider the legacy of at least two important Virginians, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson, with respect to the freedom of speech. The U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) posits rights that are inalienable; the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom (1779) stressed that freedom of conscience is first among those inalienable rights. What became the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution takes its inspiration from these texts and these Virginians.

Throughout its history, many Virginians have also been excluded or had their rights to speech and assembly infringed on account of identity characteristics, like race. The landmark case of *Virginia v. Black* (2003) andthe infamous Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville (2017) revealed how free speech principles may be coopted to intimidate and uphold white supremacy. Submissions that interrogate this tension between freedom of speech as an anchor in the quest for a more perfect union and an anchor that prevents social change are especially encouraged.

Proposals that explore connections and co-sponsorship with other divisions or interest groups are strongly encouraged. Please notify the convention planner if you think your proposal would be suitable for co-sponsorship.

***The division welcomes four types of submissions:***

**(1)** Completed papers of up to 25 pages (excluding references).

**(2)** Extended abstracts of between 500 and 2000 words that outline the paper’s research questions, methodology (archive, case, text, etc.), theoretical framing, and initial findings.

**(3)** Thematic panels of 3–5 papers focused on a central topic. Panels comprised of individuals representing different institutions are preferred.

**(4)** Round table discussion panels of between 4–7 discussants focused on a central topic.

Details for each submission type are as follows.

**Competitive Paper Submissions**

All submissions must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at <https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>.

“Competitive papers” are completed research projects that develop a substantive critical, methodological, or theoretical contribution. Submissions will consist of 1) the full paper with all identifying information removed, 2) a separate cover page with the paper title, author(s)’ names, institutional affiliation(s), contact information, and an abstract of no more than 200 words.

Please follow the instructions on the convention site. Omit all author-identifying information from the manuscript to facilitate anonymous review.

All completed papers submitted will be considered for the Division’s Top Paper Award.

For *student papers*, indicate “STUDENT” on the first page of the manuscript, and indicate “Student Paper” during the submission process. The Division’s Top Student Paper will be submitted for consideration for the SSCA Bostrom Young Scholar Award. To be eligible for student awards, all authors of the paper must be students at the time the papers is submitted. (i.e., a paper co-authored by a student and a faculty member will not be classified as a student paper.)

*Debut Papers:* A “debut paper” is one submitted by an author or authors who are presenting at SSCA for the first time.

**Extended Abstract Submissions**

The division encourages proposals of works-in-progress that address ongoing legal, social, and political issues bearing on freedom of speech. This submission option is ideal for graduate students, those embarking on a new project, or those whose work addresses rapidly evolving areas of law and politics (e.g., pending cases and legislation). Extended abstracts will be considered along-side completed papers for inclusion in the program, but will not be eligible for the Top Paper Award.

All submissions must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at <https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>

Submit an abstract as a paper submission. A strong abstract submission will address the following: 1) Big picture topic, case, or controversy, 2) Methodology, 3) Theoretical framework, 4) Initial findings, tentative conclusions, and/or hypotheses, 5) How the paper will contribute to our understanding of the freedom of speech, and 6) References.

**Panel Submissions**

All submissions must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at <https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>

Panel proposals are for a slate of papers focused on a central theme. This type of session typically has 3–5 presentations. Submissions must include 1) a panel title, 2) an overall panel rationale (no more than 200 words) and 3) the following information about EACH presentation on the panel: a) the presentation title, b) the presentation author(s), with their institutional affiliation(s) and contact information, and c) the presentation abstract (no more than 200 words per abstract). All of this should be compiled in a single document and submitted in the “paper upload option” on the XCD platform.

A best practice for all divisions is to submit panel proposals with diverse participants comprised of individuals representing different institutions, and where possible and relevant, potential new members.

**Round Table Submissions**

All submissions must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at <https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>.

Round table proposals bring together a group of scholars to discuss a topic or theme. This type of session typically has between 4–7 presentations. Submissions must include 1) a session title, 2) an overall session rationale (no more than 200 words), 3) a list of participants’ names with their institutional affiliations and contact information. *All of this should be compiled in a single document and submitted in the “paper upload option” on the XCD platform.*

A best practice for all divisions is to submit round table proposals with diverse participants comprised of individuals representing different institutions, and where possible and relevant, potential new members.

**Pertinent to All Submissions**

**Submissions must be completed online no later than 11:59 p.m. PDT on Saturday, September 15, 2023.**

Go to the paper submission site by going to the conference website (<https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member>) and clicking the submission link. First time visitors to the site will need to create an account. Return visitors will need to make sure to use the same email address that they used to establish the account. To avoid technical problems, early submission is strongly advised. Any submission not meeting the above requirements will not be accepted for review. If you have additional questions, please contact the Division or Interest Group Vice-Chair and Planner.

**Audio-Visual Support**: Audio-visual equipment should be requested ONLY if it is essential to a presentation. Most submissions do not require A/V equipment and there will be limited availability during the conference. Your judiciousness is appreciated in considering whether a request is appropriate for your presentation. Due to prohibitive cost, A/V requests will be considered but may not be met. The final program will indicate which sessions have A/V capability. An alternative may be a shareable QR code that audience members can access from their own personal devices.

**Submission Protocol***:* Submissions to SSCA must be original research that has not been published or presented at another regional, national, or international conference. Also, the same paper or panel should not be submitted to more than one division. Divisions and interest groups reserve the right to reject any submissions not following these standards.

If you have any questions, please contact the 2025 program planner for the division, John Banister, [jp.banister@gmail.com](mailto:jp.banister@gmail.com)