<h1 align="center">Southern States Communication Association
96th Annual Convention | "Comm-AI-nity: Conversations in the Age of Intelligence"
April 8-12, 2026 | Birmingham, AL</h1>

Rhetoric & Public Address Division
Vice-Chair & Program Planner: Lionnell "Badu" Smith, lsmith1914@sfsu.edu

The **Rhetoric and Public Address Division** invites submissions for competitive selection for the SSCA 2026 Conference to be held in Birmingham, AL. We especially welcome submissions that address the convention theme, "**Comm-AI-nity: Conversations in the Age of Intelligence**."

> As we gather in Birmingham, Alabama, a historic site of civil rights struggle and rhetorical resistance, we ask how our conversations about artificial intelligence—its promises, biases, and perils—might echo, complicate, or even revitalize the legacies of public address in movements for justice.
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> With the presidential election behind us and the political climate charged anew, we also encourage submissions that interrogate how rhetoric operates in the wake of democratic uncertainty, algorithmic influence, and post-truth discourse. How are communities using (or resisting) AI technologies to assemble, to protest, to remember, and to imagine different futures? What does it mean to build a rhetorical "community" when our conversations are increasingly mediated by artificial interlocutors?
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> We also invite critical reflections on what—and who—is centered in rhetorical studies today. What assumptions about voice, intelligence, and decorum must we rethink in the age of AI? Whose intelligences are rendered artificial, and who gets presumed as the speaker behind the machine? In envisioning the future of rhetorical studies and public address, we welcome work that bridges humanistic inquiry with technological critique, particularly from scholars engaging Afrofuturism, disability rhetorics, environmental justice, and trans/queer technocultures.
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> We especially encourage graduate student submissions and collaborative panels that foreground seasoned and emerging scholars as well as experimental approaches to public address.

Awards: The division recognizes excellent scholarship with two awards: Top Student Paper and Top Faculty Paper. The top student paper will also be entered into the SSCA Robert Bostrom Young Scholar Award competition.

Competitive Paper Submissions: All papers must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member

Competitive papers are completed research projects dealing with a substantive critical, methodological, or theoretical contribution. Paper submissions will consist of 1) the paper with all identifying information removed, 2) a separate cover page with the paper/performance title, author(s)' names, institutional affiliation(s), contact information, and an abstract of no more than 200 words. Papers should be limited to 25 pages (excluding references).

Extended abstracts (of paper ideas or research in progress) should be 800–1,000 words and offer a clear overview of the project's argument, methods, and contribution to rhetorical studies. These

submissions should also follow standard procedures for removing any information that identifies the author and/or the institution within the paper and within any document metadata.

Student Papers: For student paper submissions, please 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 entered into the SSCA Robert Bostrom Young Scholar Award competition. For a submission to be considered a student paper and to be eligible for student awards, all authors of the paper must be students at the time the paper is submitted. Note: A paper co-authored by a student and a faculty member will not be classified as a student paper.

Thematic Panel or Roundtable Submissions: All panel proposals must be electronically submitted to the SSCA convention site at https://www.xcdsystem.com/ssca/member

Thematic panel proposals are for a slate of papers focused on a central topic or theme. This type of session typically includes 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). Compile each of these sections into one single document/file and submit in the "paper upload option" on the XCD platform.

Roundtable 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. Each of these sections should be compiled into one single document/file and submitted in the "paper upload option" on the XCD platform.

NOTE: The best practice (for all divisions) is to submit proposals with diverse participants comprised of individuals representing different institutions, and where possible and relevant, potential new members.

Audio-Visual Support: To maintain affordable conference rates, audio-visual support is extremely limited. It should be requested only if needed with supporting rationale, and A/V requests should be made as part of the submission process to the division planner. All requests will be considered, but they cannot be guaranteed. Please consider alternatives to A/V presentations whenever possible.

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.

Submission Deadline: Submissions must be submitted online no later than 11:59 p.m. PST on **Monday, September 15, 2025**. Go to the 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 Rhetoric and Public Address Division Vice-Chair and Planner, Lionnell "Badu" Smith (lsmith1914@sfsu.edu).