

2026 Conference of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations

Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, June 25–27, 2026

The Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) invites proposals for its 2026 annual conference. The deadline for proposals is **December 1, 2025**.

2026 marks the **250th anniversary** of the Declaration of Independence. In historian David Armitage's construction, it was a declaration of interdependence as much as independence: a strategic and legalistic move aimed at securing international recognition of the rebelling colonies as legitimate members of the global community of states. As a foundational act, it inspired numerous emulations abroad, while at home, it was also always partial and exclusionary, necessitating continual rearticulation under the pressures of violence, racism, empire, and capitalism. Special consideration at the 2026 conference will therefore be given to panels that consider questions of independence, sovereignty, and interdependence in the context of the United States' relationship with the world.

The Program Committee is particularly interested in proposals that address the following topics as they relate to the 250th anniversary: independence, sovereignty, and interdependence; environment and extraction; geographies/boundaries; violence and legitimacy; capitalism; colonialism; foundations and re-foundations; memory and commemoration; technology; practice and performance; democracy and authority; power and diplomacy.

SHAFR is dedicated to the study of the history of the United States in the world, broadly conceived. This includes not only foreign relations, diplomacy, statecraft, and strategy, but also heterogeneous approaches to Americans' relations with the wider world, including but not limited to global governance, transnational movements, religion, human rights, race, gender, political economy and business, immigration, borderlands, the environment, empire, and – more broadly – the projection of U.S. power and the various ways it has been received, negotiated, contested and resisted. SHAFR welcomes those who study any period, from the colonial era to the present. Given that the production, exercise, and understanding of U.S. power takes many forms and touches myriad subjects, the Program Committee welcomes proposals reflecting a broad range of approaches and topics.

The Program Committee welcomes panels that transcend conventional periodization, challenge received categories or otherwise offer innovative approaches and fresh thinking. SHAFR 2026 is particularly open to **sponsorship** of panels with professional associations. Please provide a letter of support from the sponsoring organization with your proposal.

Please visit the conference website (<https://shafr.org/shafr2026>) to access the application portal, Panelists-Seeking-Panelists Forum, and criteria for travel awards.

Proposals

All proposals should be submitted via Google Forms, with the proposal submitted as a single PDF document.

Traditional Panels allow scholars to share their research via a paper presentation. Panels consist of a chair, commentator, and three participants (20 minutes per presentation). Occasionally, a panel may have a fourth presenter, requiring presentations to be shortened to 15 minutes. One person

may serve as both chair and commentator. Following the individual presentations, the commentator offers remarks

- Title of panel and a short, one-paragraph description
- CV for each participant (1-2 pages)
- Email address of the designated contact person
- Description of papers (50-100 words each)
- Brief statement detailing how the submission advances SHAFR's commitment to equity, access, and representation (encouraged, but not mandatory)

Roundtables consist of a chair and 3-4 participants. This format can be used to discuss research, edited volumes, historiographical trends, or professional concerns. After the chair's introduction, each participant provides opening remarks of at least 5 minutes. Roundtables do not include individual presentations; instead, they focus on fostering a conversation among panelists.

- Title of panel and a one-paragraph description of the roundtable's topic AND the expected contribution of each participant
- CV for each participant (1-2 pages)
- Email address of the designated contact person
- Brief statement detailing how the submission advances SHAFR's commitment to equity, access, and representation (encouraged, but not mandatory)

Lightning Rounds are a fast-paced take on a traditional panel discussion. Participants on a lightning round are expected to pitch their research in 5-10 minutes, rather than deliver a full paper. Lightning rounds consist of a chair who introduces participants, keeps everyone on time, and moderates Q&A, alongside 5-7 participants. Lightning rounds are great opportunities for graduate students or those in the early stages of a project to share their work and receive feedback.

- Title of panel and a short, one-paragraph description
- CV for each participant (1-2 pages)
- Email address of the designated contact person
- Description of papers (50-100 words each)
- Brief statement detailing how the submission advances SHAFR's commitment to equity, access, and representation (encouraged, but not mandatory)

Fishbowls consist of a chair and several participants. This format is similar to a roundtable, but with greater fluidity and audience engagement. After the chair's introduction, each participant provides opening remarks of at least 5 minutes. Fishbowls are particularly effective for memorial sessions and anniversaries.

- Title of panel and a one-paragraph description of the roundtable's topic AND the expected contribution of each participant
- CV for each participant (1-2 pages)
- Email address of the designated contact person
- Brief statement detailing how the submission advances SHAFR's commitment to equity, access, and representation (encouraged, but not mandatory)

Individual paper proposals are also welcome, though complete panels with coherent themes will be favored over single papers. Those seeking to create or fill out a panel should use #SHAFR2026 on social media or consult the Panelists Seeking Panelists forum on the conference website.

SHAFR is committed to the values of equity, access, and representation. The organization invites proposals from all, especially scholars of color, those who identify as women, individuals residing outside the United States, junior and contingent faculty, scholars working in other fields and disciplines, and those who work in less commonly studied chronological periods or who engage with less traditional methodological approaches. The Program Committee welcomes—but does not require—proposals that include a statement detailing how their submission advances SHAFR’s commitment to these values.

The Program Committee will develop a pool of potential commentators/chairs for panels constructed from individual proposals. If you are interested in volunteering for this pool, please contact the program co-chairs, Mario Del Pero and Tamson Pietsch, at program-chair@shafr.org. Senior scholars, in particular, are encouraged to volunteer.

Policies

Each conference participant may only serve on the program twice, each time in a different capacity. For example: one may serve once as a chair and once as a commentator; or once as panelist and once as chair or commentator. **No participant may appear on the program more than twice.** Any special scheduling requests (e.g., that a panel not take place on a particular day) must be made at the time of application and included in your proposal

All proposals and funding applications should be submitted via the procedures outlined. Applicants requiring alternative means to submit the proposal should contact the program co-chairs via email at program-chair@shafr.org.

Generally, annual membership in SHAFR is required for those participating in the 2026 meeting. The president and Program Committee may (upon request) grant a few exemptions to scholars whose specializations are outside the field. Membership instructions will be included with notification of accepted proposals. Everyone appearing on the program must be registered no later than 30 days prior to the start of the conference.

SHAFR and the media occasionally record conference sessions for use in broadcast and electronic media. Presenters who do not wish for their session to be recorded may opt out when submitting a proposal to the Program Committee. An audience member who wishes to record audio or video of a panel must obtain written permission from panelists. SHAFR is not responsible for unauthorized recording. SHAFR reserves the right to revoke the registration of anyone who records sessions without appropriate permissions.

Funding Opportunities

SHAFR offers a variety of travel awards to help offset the cost of attending its annual conference. These awards, which vary in amount, are intended to support members who might otherwise face financial barriers to participation.

Funding requests will have no bearing on the committee's decisions on panels/papers, but funds will not be awarded unless the applicant's submission is accepted by the Program Committee in a separate decision. All travel awards are distributed on-site during the conference upon submission of receipts.

International members are especially encouraged to apply for travel funding; thanks to the generous support of donors, SHAFR has increased the number of awards available to global scholars.

Application deadline: **January 1, 2026.**

Divine Graduate Student Travel Grants

SHAFR will award several Robert A. and Barbara Divine Graduate Student Travel Grants to assist graduate students presenting papers at the 2026 conference. No award will exceed \$500. Priority will be given to graduate students who receive no or limited funds from their home institutions

Applications must include: a copy of the individual paper proposal along with a short cv (2-page maximum), a 1-page letter from the applicant, proposed budget, and an email from the graduate advisor that confirms the lack of departmental travel funds.

SHAFR Global Scholars and Diversity Grants

These grants are aimed at scholars whose participation in the annual meeting helps to diversify the organization. Preference will be given to individuals who have not previously presented at the annual meeting. The awards are intended for scholars who represent groups historically underrepresented at SHAFR, scholars who offer diverse and complementary intellectual approaches, and scholars from outside the United States. "Scholars" includes faculty, graduate students, and independent researchers. To further integrate grant winners into SHAFR, awards include a one-year membership to the organization, with subscriptions to *Diplomatic History* and *Passport*.

Applicants should submit a copy of their individual paper proposal along with a short cv (2-page maximum), proposed budget, and a 2-3 paragraph essay addressing the fellowship criteria (including data on previous SHAFR meetings attended and funding received).

Leffler Scholars Travel Grants

Leffler Scholars grants subsidize SHAFR conference attendance by members who hold a Ph.D. and who aspire to attend the conference but lack professional funding to do so. This includes contingent faculty, K-12 educators, independent scholars, and those working off the tenure track.

Applications must include: a copy of the individual paper proposal along with a short cv (2-page maximum), proposed budget, and a 1-page letter from the applicant addressing the fellowship criteria.