

**Constitution and By-Laws  
of The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States**  
As Adopted on 1 May 2004; revised in November 2008.

**ARTICLE I**

**Name**

The name of this Society shall be THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF THE MULTI-ETHNIC LITERATURE OF THE UNITED STATES, hereafter referred to as MELUS. The Society shall be incorporated as a non-profit organization under the laws of the State of Connecticut or under the laws of the state to which the MELUS membership votes to move the Society hereafter.

**ARTICLE II**

**Purpose of the Society**

**Section 1.** MELUS is an organization for all people who are professionally interested in expanding the definitions of American literature. We seek to study all forms of this pluralistic literature, in all the languages of every culture, from pre-Columbian times to the present. MELUS is a forum for research and the dissemination of this research globally, [through the MELUS journal, MELUS NewsNotes and website, an annual national conference to heighten cultural awareness and diversity, as well as through books, articles and publications, panels, and professional meetings deemed appropriate by the members of the Society. The Executive Committee shall review all proposals to expand MELUS internationally to determine if these international groups are financially viable and willing to abide by the MELUS Constitution. No international organization may use the MELUS name without meeting these criteria.

**Section 2.** We recognize the importance of ethnic identity and the necessity of making both cultural and aesthetic judgments in regard to all literature, including the diversity that is called “American literature”; i.e., the literature of Asian-Americans, Afro-Americans, Native Americans, Puerto Ricans, Chicanos, Latinos, and Americans of European extraction like Italians and the Polish, and, specifically, religious ethnic groups such as Jews who have been ignored, misread, or underrepresented in the past. The Society endeavors to provide a more-balanced appreciation of the scholarly expertise of the people, cultures, and literatures that comprise the United States.

**Section 3.** We intend to recover forgotten literature, much of it written in languages other than English, which is now deposited in libraries of historical and fraternal societies, and private collections.

**Section 4.** We propose to study the ethnic component in all American literature. Many writers who have been classified as “mainstream” or canonical have been sensitive to the pluralistic nature of our society. “American” and “ethnic” writers have influenced each other; we propose to explore these influences.

**Section 5.** To realize these purposes MELUS will organize and conduct public meetings, seminars, and conferences throughout the United States and the world. We will cooperate with other scholars and organizations to coordinate research, sponsor area and joint meetings, and the Society issues directories of the membership, bibliographies, and other appropriate publications.

**Section 6.** No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be for the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, nor shall the Corporation participate in or intervene in any political campaign of any candidate for public office. MELUS does take stands on issues of educational and intellectual significance.

**Section 7:** The Corporation is organized and shall be operated exclusively for such charitable, scientific, literary or educational purposes as the Executive Committee may approve and as are within the purposes herein expressed. The Corporation is not organized for pecuniary profit, and shall not engage in any activities for any pecuniary profit and no officer, member or employee of the Corporation shall receive any pecuniary profit from the operations thereof except repayment of expenses reasonably incurred in effecting or carrying out one or more of its activities. No part of any net earnings of the Corporation shall inure to the benefit of any member or individual.

### **ARTICLE III**

#### **Membership**

##### **Members**

**Section 1.** The membership consists of individuals and institutions who have paid yearly dues as specified by the Executive Committee. Membership is maintained by payment of subsequent annual dues that are used to support the services provided to the members of the Society. An individual member has full voting privileges. Institutions, however, have no voting privilege. Should the Society designate some individuals as non-dues-paying (i.e., as honorary), they shall not vote.

**Section 2.** Payment of yearly dues entitles the member to receive the newsletter NewsNotes, the membership directory and electronic list, the Society's online newsletter, and the journal. He/she is also entitled to participate and vote in any conference and business meeting organized by MELUS, subject to any applicable registration fees.

### **ARTICLE IV**

#### **Officers:**

**Section 1.** The Executive Committee shall consist of a President, a Program Chair, a Secretary, a Treasurer, the Editor of the *MELUS Journal*, a Membership Chair, the Project Chair and the Graduate Student Representative. This Committee is responsible for the operation of the Association, subject to review by the entire membership at the annual meeting.

**Section 2.** All officers of the Executive Committee (with the exception of the Editor of the Journal), are elected for a term of three years. They are eligible for re-election once, with the exception of the Treasurer, who has no limitations on renewal of appointment. Should a vacancy occur, the position may be filled temporarily by an appointee of the Executive Committee. The Journal Editor receives five-year appointments from the Executive Committee, with no limitations on renewal of appointment.

**Section 3.** The Executive Committee may appoint ex officio members as situations warrant.

**Section 4.** The Executive Committee shall report on the year's activities at the annual meeting. Details of that meeting including a complete financial statement shall be published in NewsNotes.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **Publications of MELUS**

**Section 1.** All publications of MELUS [whether or not financed by MELUS] shall be directed by an Editorial Board consisting of the Editor-in-Chief of the Journal and two appointees. Subject to the approval of the Executive Committee, the Editorial Board can form committees designed to create, promote, and sponsor various publications (monographs, etc.), in appropriate cases, nominating to the Executive Committee special editors for newly-created publications.

**Section 2.** The contents of the MELUS NewsNotes issues will be determined by the Editor of NewsNotes in consultation with the MELUS President and the necessary or appropriate Executive Committee officers.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Meetings**

**Section 1.** MELUS will meet at least once a year for the transaction of business by the membership. The meetings will take place at the annual MELUS Conference. Usually, the Executive Committee will also meet at the annual Modern Language Association Convention, and at other times as necessary. The President of the Executive Committee /MELUS will designate the place and time.

**Section 2.** Voting by proxy shall be allowed. [Such votes can be brought to the Executive Committee by any of the officers of the association, including the Society's two Editors and Project Chairperson.

**Section 3.** Robert's Rules of Order shall govern meetings, unless a majority determines that an alternative procedure is preferable.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Amendments and Ratification**

**Section 1.** Any two (2) members of the Executive Committee or any five (5) members may petition that the Constitution be amended. With the support of the majority of the Executive Committee (polled by mail), the Amendment will be submitted to the entire membership. The vote will be conducted and mailed with a designated date posted for submission of ballots. The majority vote will rule. Should the Executive Committee not approve a submitted Amendment, a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the attending members of the business meeting can force submission of the Amendment to the entire membership. The majority of those voting will rule.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Effective Date of this MELUS Constitution**

**Section 1.** This Constitution shall be effective after approval by a majority of the voting membership. Voting shall be conducted by mail with a designated date for return of ballots, and the results shall be disclosed at the next business meeting.

## **Article IX**

### **Dissolution and Termination**

**Section 1.** Upon termination and dissolution of this association the Officers shall proceed to wind up affairs of the association in accordance with the laws of the State of Connecticut in such case provided, paying all bills and debts of the association, and distributing remaining assets, if any, to such similar non-profit, tax-exempt, charitable, or educational institution as the Officers shall in their best discretion deem advisable, which charitable or educational institution shall be an organization included in the provisions of Section 501 © (3), 1954 Internal Revenue Code as amended from time to time. Upon dissolution and termination, no monies or profits whatsoever shall be paid to any officer or any other person except for compensation for services rendered or verified out-of-pocket expenses.

## **BY-LAWS**

### **Article I**

#### **Membership Dues**

**Section 1.** Annual dues will be established by the Executive Committee and based on the expenses of the Society and its different types of memberships (i. e. institutions, international members, retirees, and such). Membership begins January 1 of each year. Payment of dues shall allow the member to receive NewsNotes and the journal and any other publication designated by the Executive Committee for distribution to the entire membership.

#### **Patrons**

**Section 1.** Individuals and institutions (such as colleges, universities, academic departments and programs, and other organizations) may serve as patrons by making annual contributions at a rate determined by the Executive Committee.

## **Article II**

### **Change of Status**

Section 1. If a member resigns during the year, his dues are forfeited. Should a member not pay his dues one year after a renewal notice, he shall cease to be a member in good standing, duly notified in writing by the Treasurer.

### **Keeping Informed**

Section 1. Currently, the Society operates without a paid staff or office and depends on volunteer time and labor. While the Society will make every effort to keep accurate membership records, members should also take personal responsibility for keeping the Society informed of changes of address and other information vital to keeping in contact with the organization.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Election of Officers**

**Section 1 .** The election of officers takes place every three years. In the third year of any term, no later than the **1<sup>st</sup> of September**, the Executive Committee will appoint an Election Committee of three—one of whom preferably is someone who has served on the Executive Committee—to take charge of all facets of the election process including recruitment of a slate of candidates, creation of the ballot, mailing of said ballot, and counting the votes. The members of the Election Committee must be MELUS members in good standing, and they will choose a chair among themselves.

**Section 2.** The election committee will announce the call for nominations, including job descriptions of each position, on the MELUS listserv, MELUS Newsnotes, the website, and among the members more generally.

**Section 3.** All MELUS members in good standing are eligible for nomination to any position. Graduate students are encouraged to run for Graduate Student Representative.

**Section 4.** Those who have not been self-nominated will be contacted by the Election Committee to ensure that they are willing to run for office. Those nominating themselves or others will submit their curriculum vitae and a brief description of their experiences related to their desired position as well as any vision they have for the office they would like to hold.

**Section 5.** The Election Committee has the power to invalidate nominations if the candidate is not a member of MELUS in good standing or if the nominee has not attended MELUS meetings in recent years.

**Section 6.** The Election Committee will generate a ballot from these nominations, preferably with at least two candidates per office by **November 1<sup>st</sup>**. The ballot should include each candidate's name, position, and candidate's statement. The Election Committee will make the ballots accessible to all MELUS members in good standing. Members should vote and submit their ballots no later than **December 31<sup>st</sup>**. The

Committee will count the ballots and report the complete results to the Executive Committee and the Membership by **January 15<sup>th</sup>**.

**Section 7.** The Election Committee can invalidate any ballot submitted by non members.

**Section 8.** The candidate with a simple majority will be declared the winner for each position. In case of a tie, the Election Committee will arrange another election between the tied candidates within a week after announcing the general election results. MELUS members will vote and submit their ballots to break this tie no later than **February 15**.

**Section 9.** The newly elected officers will be introduced at the annual conference.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **Duties of MELUS Officers**

**Section 1.** In addition to duties defined in the Constitution, the officers shall perform the duties traditionally associated with their various offices.

**Section 2.** The President shall chair meetings of the Society and coordinate all of the functions of the Society. He/she shall administer the Constitution and By-Laws throughout the year. With the elected members of the Executive Committee, he/she appoints all non-elected officers, reviews significant expenditures, and shall make arrangements for conferences, national and regional meetings, publications, etc. The President takes ultimate responsibility for all aspects of the Society's programs and activities.

**Section 3.** The Secretary shall set the agenda and keep minutes of the Executive Committee and membership meetings and shall distribute copies to the Executive Committee before each meeting. The Editor of MELUS NewsNotes should receive a copy of the minutes in time to publish them in the first yearly—usually January--issue. In conjunction with the President, the Secretary will also notify the Executive Committee of the time and place of its annual meeting. The Secretary also serves as the liaison between the Executive Committee and the Editor of NewsNotes, the Webmaster/mistrix, the MELUS listserv moderator. This officer is involved with communicating internally and externally the activities and policies of the Society.

**Section 4.** The Treasurer shall establish and maintain a careful bookkeeping system in accordance with the requirements put forth by the non-profit corporation laws. He/she, as well, sends out to the President and the Membership Chairperson a monthly list of all checks received from the membership. He/She reports regularly to the Executive Committee about such matters as the percentage of dues which goes to the journal, regular payments to the journal, and regular financial statements received from the Managing Editor of the Journal, which the treasurer incorporates into his/her quarterly report and will eventually present in an annual report at the business meeting. This officer also works with the Executive Committee on basic financial operations, such as designing a yearly budget, fulfilling contractual obligations, and receiving and keeping track of all MELUS funds, including membership and conference registration fees.

Members of the Executive Committee may also call on this officer to assist in soliciting patrons, writing grant proposals and promoting other activities that support the financial health of MELUS.

**Section 5.** All records shall be in duplicate, one set housed in the home office of the corporation, the other in the possession of the officer concerned. With each change of office, records shall be delivered intact to the new officer. All past and present officers who hold important records of the Society shall send them to the MELUS archives.

**Section 6.** The Program Chair shall coordinate the annual program, including the national MELUS conference and sessions at other regional and national conferences. The Program Chairperson directs preparations for the annual national MELUS Conference in consultation with the Executive Committee and local organizers. Once the MELUS President has secured a contract with a university that specifies the responsibilities of the campus and the Society, the Program Chair or his/her designate serves as a resource person for the campus coordinator, who is expected to follow the guidelines outlined in the MELUS Conference Handbook. The Program Chair shall develop procedures for future projects and programs.

**Section 7.** The Editorial Board -- the Editors of the MELUS journal and NewsNotes-- shall receive manuscripts, edit and prepare for publication all materials selected, and issue an annual report to the Executive Committee. It will, as well, coordinate any other publications.

**Section 8.** The Editor of the MELUS journal is appointed by the MELUS President, in conjunction with the elected members of the Executive Committee. THE MELUS Editor shall receive manuscripts for publication consideration, and members of the Editorial Board will evaluate and referee submissions to the journal. Work recommended for publication will be edited and prepared for dissemination by the Editor and the MELUS editorial staff. The editor and the MELUS editorial staff shall keep timely and useful records of submissions and on-going discussions with authors and scholars. The Editor is a voting member of the Executive Committee.

**Section 9.** The Editor of the MELUS NEWSNOTES shall also be appointed by the President of MELUS in conjunction with the elected members of the Executive Committee and will oversee this on-line publication. The Editor shall in turn select a Webmaster to operate the NewsNotes and MELUS websites.

**Section 10.** All members of the Executive Committee shall be actively involved in the operation of the organization. They will be polled in order to prepare the agenda for the annual meeting.

**Section 11.** The Membership Chair is charged with all responsibilities and duties related to the recruitment and retention of members. Primary among these duties is to keep the MELUS membership database up to date using information provided by the Editor of the Melus Journal and the Treasurer and to make that information available as deemed

necessary by the Membership Chair and Executive Committee. The Membership Chair is also responsible for establishing and executing a plan for increasing membership.

**Section 12.** The Project Chair serves as Executive Committee liaison to the various ongoing projects that the organization may undertake through ad hoc committees and subcommittees. This officer is responsible for executing special projects the Executive Committee may deem necessary to pursue for the benefit of the organization at large. The Project Chair must report to the Executive Committee on the status of said projects. At the beginning of his or her term, the Project Chair, along with the Executive Committee, will establish a work plan to cover the most pressing projects.

**Section 13.** Graduate Student Representative. The Graduate Student Representative helps the Society address the specific needs and concerns of MELUS members who are currently graduate students and recruits new members and potential leaders for MELUS from among this population.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **Prohibition on Officers**

Section 1. No committee person or other officer of the corporation shall (a) receive, directly or indirectly, any salary, compensation or emolument from the Corporation, either as such officer or committee member or in any capacity, unless authorized by the By-laws and by the concurring vote of two-thirds of all the Members, or (b) be interested, directly or indirectly, in any contract for furnishing supplies thereto, unless authorized by the By-laws or by the concurring vote of two-thirds of the committee persons.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Meetings**

Section 1. At the annual business meeting a quorum shall consist of a majority of the Executive Committee, at least one being the Chairperson or his/her officially designated replacement. Other meetings may be called by the Executive Committee (regional, joint, etc.) and committees may be created to meet the particular needs of such meetings.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Amendments**

Section 1. These by-laws may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of those eligible to vote. A member may propose an amendment, submit it to the Executive Committee where it must be approved by a majority. The Executive Committee will be polled. Written notice of the proposed amendment must be mailed by the Secretary to each member at least two (2) months before the annual meeting. Results of the voting will be announced at the annual meeting, with a two-thirds (2/3) vote of eligible members required for passage.

## **Article VIII**

### **MELUS Awards**

**Section 1.** The Executive Committee may confer a "Scholar of the Year" or "Lifetime

Achievement” award.

**Section 2.** The MELUS Journal Editor and the Editorial Board may also confer an “Award for the Best Article of the Year” and the “Best Graduate Student Article Award for the Year.”

Signed this date: 1 May in 2004

**President:** Fred Gardaphe  
Campus: State University of New York at Stony Brook

**Vice President and Program Director:** Wenying Xu  
Campus: Florida Atlantic University

**Secretary:** Jesse Aleman  
Campus: University of New Mexico

**Treasurer:** Kim Martin Long  
Campus: Shippensburg University of Pennsylvania

Amended by Membership vote: November 2008

--in favor, 90.3%

--opposed, 3.2%

--abstained, 6.5%