



Declarations & Collaborations  
in The Queen City  
Charlotte, NC  
2026

MARCH 26-28, 2026  
HILTON UNIVERSITY PLACE



# CONTENTS

## PAGES 3-8

### **WELCOME TO CEA/SALA 2026!**

Greetings from CEA and SALA officers and the 2026 Conference Chairs.

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## PAGE 9-10

### **CONFERENCE QUICK START & C4ME GUIDE**

A few Quick Tips to get you started on your conference journey, including how to navigate the C4Me app.

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## PAGES 10-13

### **SPECIAL EVENTS & SPEAKERS**

Read about our exciting speakers and the expertise and ideas they will share, as well as the fabulous events that are part of CEA/SALA 2026.

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## PAGES 14-15

### **ALL KINDS OF MAPS**

Find your way around: a map of our conference space and a map of the light rail LYNX BLUE LINE

## PAGE 16-19

### **GET TO KNOW CHARLOTTE**

Some sights worth seeing while you are visiting the CLT (after sessions, of course!) both in town and just outside the door.

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## PAGES 20-22

### **BEER IS FOOD. AND OTHER FOOD.**

A list of restaurants for post-session conviviality (and cocktails!). Eat local or explore the options in town.

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### **THE CONFERENCE SCHEDULE IS AVAILABLE AS A PDF ON THE CEA WEBSITE**



[https:// cea-web.org](https://cea-web.org)

# WELCOME TO CEA/SALA 2026

Ken Bugajski, CEA Executive Director



It is my pleasure to welcome you to the College English Association's Annual Conference!

When our Program Chair, Emily Pucker, chose the conference theme of Declarations, she did so for its associations with our host city of Charlotte, the origin of the Mecklenburg Declaration and Mecklenburg Resolves, both of which assert, in 1775, the autonomy of Mecklenburg County citizens, independent of British rule. The idea of declarations—of independence, truth, and conscience, to name only a few—remain ideas central to our national character, to our profession, and to individual identity.

Declarations—like the Meck Dec, which is celebrated in Charlotte each May—can be public and political, marking a turning point in the history of a community. Literature, of course, has its own declarations: when a poet asserts his or her voice, when a narrator uncovers a truth, or a character acknowledges a desire. Our pedagogy, too, is full of and informed by declarations—what we say in the classroom and what we state in our teaching philosophy. The conference program Emily created highlights the diverse nature of declarations in authors as diverse as William Shakespeare, Edwidge Danticat, and ChatGPT; texts ranging from autobiography to graphic novels; and in teaching, whether in a classroom or digital space.

Beyond the panels, I hope you will attend The President's Reception on Thursday evening, following Chris Anson's Plenary Address. These signature events promise to continue our tradition of great food and collegiality and will give you the opportunity to declare your favorite beverage—with a free drink. Additionally, A.J. Hartley is sure to provide an outstanding conclusion for our 2026 gathering at Saturday's All-Conference Lunch.\* Throughout the conference, it is my hope that CEA's welcoming and friendly spirit will be present and part of your experience.

Declarations and independence are part of Charlotte's history and a part of the lives we live today. However you find yourself at CEA's annual conference—whether you are attending for the first time as a graduate student, as a faculty member who has lost count of the number of conferences you've attended, or as someone experiencing CEA for the first time as a participant with the South Asian Literary Society—I hope your presence and participation will help you better appreciate the declarations you have made and continue to make in your teaching, your research, and your life.

\*Please note that pre-registration is required for the All-Conference Lunch

# WELCOME TO CEA/SALA 2026

Maryse Jayasuriya, SALA President

A warm welcome to the CEA/SALA Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina! SALA is very excited for two reasons: this is our first in-person conference since our 2020 SALA Conference in Seattle, and it is also our first collaboration with the College English Association! It is wonderful for us all to be together and attend both SALA and CEA sessions!

My heartiest thanks to Ani Mukhopadhyay (who is also SALA's Vice President) and Jana Fedtke, our two intrepid conference co-chairs who have done marvelous work organizing this conference, with ready guidance from our SALA Officers—Moumin Quazi, Meghan Gorman-DaRif, Cynthia Leenerts, and Nalini Iyer, along with the Executive Committee.

My sincere thanks to the CEA Officers and Executive Board for being such wonderful partners. The SALA Conference theme this year is "collaborations," and this endeavor has exemplified what a productive collaboration can bring to fruition.

I hope you enjoy the intellectual stimulation of the SALA and CEA panels as well as the fellowship enabled by our time together!



# WELCOME TO CEA/SALA 2026

Moumin Quazi, CEA President



I am so thrilled to welcome you to CEA's first-ever collaborative effort with the South Asian Literary Association, an organization we have been allied with since 2020. The executive team of both the CEA and SALA have worked hard during the last year and a half to make this dual effort in Charlotte, North Carolina, a success. I'm especially grateful to Ken Bugajski and Jeri Kraver (of the CEA), plus Maryse Jayasuriya (president of SALA), with Emily Pucker (CEA Program Chair) and Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay and Jana Fedtke (SALA Conference Co-Chairs), plus all the CEA Board of Directors and Executive Committee (SALA) members. Now, as we embark on a great few days of presentations at the Charlotte Hilton University Place, you are the superstars that will make this joint-conference memorable and exceptional!

Peace! Salaam! Welcome!



# WELCOME TO CEA/SALA 2026

Emily Jane Pucker, CEA First Vice President  
& Program Chair

We're so excited to welcome you to Charlotte. **The Program Committee** has worked hard to bring you a conference that engages with the most pressing topics in our discipline and our world today: together, we'll consider literature from around the world, diverse experiences with college English, and the continuing emergence of generative AI. CEA is known for our sense of welcome and collegiality, so we invite you to join in on some new conversations and make some new friends. As Charlotte once hosted a declaration that helped shape a nation, we hope this conference sparks declarations that shape our discipline.



## THANK YOU TO THE PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Luke Anderson  
Stacy Bailey  
Laura Barrio-Vilar  
Beth Battles  
Christina Bucher  
Ken Bugajski  
Aaron Bush  
Catherine Capineri  
Benjamin Carson  
Linda Di Desidero  
Ian Dixon  
Deirdre Fagan  
Catherine Forse  
Susanna Hoeness-Krupsaw  
Joe Jordan  
Valerie Kasper  
Peter Kratzke

Jeri Kraver  
Carolyn Kyler  
Cynthia Leenerts  
Lee Anna Maynard  
Ani Mukhopadhyay  
Renee Nelson  
Laura Petersen  
Emily Jane Pucker  
Moumin Quazi  
Maria Quintero  
Lynne Simpson  
Michelle Taylor  
Andrea Trocha-Van Nort  
Monica Weis SSJ  
Joe Viera  
Monica Weis, SSJ

# AND TO OUR AFFILIATES AND ALLIES

## **CEA REGIONAL AFFILIATES**

Caribbean CEA  
ICEA Indiana  
FCEA Florida  
Georgia & Carolinas CEA  
MCEA Michigan  
CEA MAG Mid-Atlantic  
Middle South CEA  
NJCEA New Jersey  
NYCEA  
CEAO Ohio  
PCEA Pennsylvania  
RMCEA Rocky Mountain  
TCEA Texas

## **ALLIED ORGANIZATIONS**

ITMS International  
Thomas Merton Society  
SALA South Asian Literary  
Association  
ATTW Association of Teachers of  
Technical Writing  
Omni Center for Peace, Justice, &  
Ecology

# CEA BOARD & OFFICERS

## OFFICERS

Executive Director: Ken Bugajski, University of Saint Francis  
Associate Director and Treasurer: Jeraldine Kraver, University of Northern Colorado  
President: Moumin Quazi, Tarleton State University  
First Vice-President and Program Chair: Emily Jane Pucker, Georgia State College & University  
Second Vice-President: Ani Mukhopadhyay, Texas A&M University, Kingsville  
Immediate Past-President: Susanna Hoeness-Krupsaw, University of Southern Indiana  
Editor, *CEA Critic*: Peter Kratzke, University of Colorado-Boulder  
Historian: Jeraldine Kraver, University of Northern Colorado  
National Coordinator of Affiliates: Valerie Kasper, St. Leo University  
Technology Director: Grant Bain, Colorado State University  
Social Media Director: Marie Taylor, Arcadia University  
Graduate Student Liaison: Hannah Mitchell, Murray State University

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Aaron Bush, University of Michigan  
Joe Jordan, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Cynthia Leenerts, East Stroudsburg University  
Laura Petersen, Our Lady of the Lake University  
Joseph Viera, Nazareth University

## WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Stacia Neely Campbell, Texas Wesleyan University  
Holy Hamby, Fisk University  
Jennie Vaughn, Jacksonville State University

## THANK YOU TO OUR RETIRING BOARD MEMBERS

Peter Elliott, Anderson University  
Andrea Van Nort, United States Air Force Academy



# QUICK TIPS!

## (1) SPRING IN CHARLOTTE

Simply put, late March in Charlotte is lovely. Daytime highs reach into the mid-60s (and maybe the 70s if we are lucky!) and lows in the 40s.



## (2) LEARN TO LOVE LYNX LIGHT RAIL

LYNX is Charlotte's light rail system, and the BLUE line is local to the conference hotel. Learn more here: <https://www.charlottenc.gov/CATS/Home>. You'll find a map in the program. There's also a helpful Plan Your Trip tool: <https://www.charlottenc.gov/CATS/Ride/Trip-Planner> or scan the QR code:



## (3) AIRPORT TRANSFERS

Light rail is **NOT** available directly from the airport. However, you can use a combination of bus and light rail. Here's how:

- Airport to City Center: Catch the CATS Sprinter Bus (Route 5) (Airport Sprinter) at the arrivals level.
- Transfer to Light Rail: Get off at the Charlotte Transportation Center (CTC) in Uptown.
- LYNX Blue Line: Walk to the CTC/Arena station and take the LYNX Blue Line train northward toward "UNC Charlotte".
- Final Stop: Exit at the JW Clay Blvd Station. The hotel is a short distance from this station.

## BEST OPTION: Uber/Lyft:

Depending on arrival times and other factors, rates run between \$24-\$40.

## (4) DOWNLOAD C4ME, YOUR CONFERENCE BUDDY

Get to know C4ME, our on-line conference program app. You can download the app for your phone or tablet. You'll have the conference, the hotel, and the city at your fingertips. Among the C4Me features—the conference schedule available on- or off-line, your own personalized agenda, maps of breakout rooms, and speaker/presenter information. Learn more about C4Me here: <https://cea-web.org/c4me-mobile-app>

## (5) YOU'RE HERE, WHERE'S THE REGISTRATION DESK?

The registration desk for CEA 2026 can be found on the ground level of the Hilton. At the registration desk, we'll give you your badge, some swag, and any tickets to events for which you have pre-registered. (And, if you want to add an event, we can do that too. We can accept only cash or ZELLE on site.)

# C4ME APP



The C4Me app puts the entire CEA/SALA conference in the palm of your hand. The C4Me app allows you to browse the conference program, review each day's sessions and panels as well as read the abstract for each presentation. In addition, you can create your own conference experience by using the *My Agenda* feature and/or adding personal notes to sessions and presentations. You'll also find the same information on the app that we have in the program: things to do, places to eat, ways to get around. Simply type "conference4me" in the Google Play or Apple store. Once downloaded, search for College English Association.

Here are just some of the cool features:

**SEARCH** The search feature allows you to find a speaker, a paper, a room. For example, you can search by "film" and find a list of sessions and papers that focus on film. Find all papers on American lit or popular culture or Shakespeare. Type in a city or a school, and see who's from what city, state, or institution. Way cool!

**AGENDA** (yes, it is military time. And you can toggle to local time on the AGENDA screen.) For each **DAY**, panels are listed by time. Click on the panel title to see a list of papers. Click on the paper title to read the abstract. (Click on the name of the presenter to see where the person might be moderating a session). Also on the AGENDA screen is **MY AGENDA**, your personal conference schedule.

*NOTE: SALA abstracts are NOT "clickable" on the C4ME app--that is, the abstracts are not available on-line. The SALA abstracts can be found as a PDF on both the SALA (<https://southasianliteraryassociation.org/2026-sala-annual-conference-abstracts/>) and CEA (<https://cea-web.org/sala-abstracts-%26-bios>) webpages.*

On the AGENDA screen, you'll see a + **ADD TO MY AGENDA** that allows you to add this panel to MY AGENDA (as well as to your personal calendar). Also on the same screen, in the upper-right corner, you'll see the **NOTES** icon. Click there and you can type in your notes for the panel and send those notes to your email, messages, keep notes, etc.

**GENERAL INFO** Here you'll find all manner of conference information including a **WELCOME** from the officers, information about events and speakers, as well as cool things to do (and eat) in our host city.

The best way to learn how to navigate C4Me is to mess about with it. (And the **BACK ARROW** is key as you move through the app!)

# SPECIAL EVENTS & SPEAKERS

Thursday, March 26, 2026

## COMMON GROUNDS: GRAD STUDENT MIXER

4:30-5:30 PM / Lakeshore Salon III

Mix and mingle with current grad students and folks who were grad students many (many, many) years ago. This event includes a drawing for two travel awards of \$150, three free registrations for CEA 2027, and three tickets to the All-Conference Luncheon (all open to graduate students only). Winners must be members of CEA. Plus learn about requesting (or becoming) a CEA Mentor. (Yes, there will be snacks!)

## JUSTICE TABLE RECEPTION

4:30-5:30 PM / Lakeshore Salon III

Formerly the PEACE BREAKFAST, the Justice Table is a chance to meet and talk with colleagues committed to and passionate about equity, advocacy, and community action. There will be light snacks.

## CONFERENCE PLENARY

5:30-6:30 / Lakeshore Salon I and II

SPEAKER: CHRIS ANSON

Chris is Distinguished University Professor and Alumni Association Distinguished Graduate Professor at North Carolina State University. Internationally recognized for his work in writing studies, he has published extensively in the field of writing studies and spoken or led faculty workshops across the United States and in 34 other countries. Chris currently serves as Chair of the International Society for the Advancement of Writing Research. Read more about his impressive (and intimidating!) professional work here: [www.ansonica.net](http://www.ansonica.net)



## PRESIDENT'S RECEPTION

6:30 - 7:30 PM

This complimentary event, hosted by CEA President Moumin Quazi, features fabulous food and the ever-popular CEA drink ticket. The reception follows the Plenary Address.

Friday, March 27, 2026

## AFFILIATES BREAKFAST

7:45 - 8:45 / Lakeview

Join the officers from CEA's Affiliate and Allied organizations for a light breakfast. Learn more about regional opportunities, including conferences and publications. Open to anyone interested in learning all about CEA's partners. **Pre-registration is required.**

# SPECIAL EVENTS & SPEAKERS



## WOMEN'S CONNECTION LUNCHEON

12:00 - 1:15 / Lakeview

SPEAKER: SARAH FATHERLY

Chief academic and operations officer for Queens University of Charlotte, Sarah oversees all academic programs and services and all campus operations. In addition to scholarship in her academic fields of study, she has published and presented widely on scaling high-impact practices, equity-minded curriculum innovation, faculty development practices, and campus partnerships for student success.

**Preregistration is required.**

Friday, March 27, 2026, continued

## SALA WELCOME ADDRESS

12:45 - 1:15PM / Lakeshore Salon IV

Join us for some welcoming words from SALA President Maryse Jayasuriya and the Conference Co-Chairs Aniruddha Mukhopadhyay, Texas A&M University-Kingsville and Jana Fedtke, NYU Shanghai.



## CONVERSATIONS ON CULTURE

4:15 - 5:30 PM / Lakeview

SPEAKER: PALLAVI RASTOGI

Pallavi is the J.F. Taylor Endowed Professor of English at Louisiana State University, where she teaches classes on global Anglophone literature, postcolonial theory, and postcolonial popular culture. She is the author of numerous works, including *Postcolonial Disaster: Narrating Catastrophe in the Twenty-First Century*, *Afrindian Fictions: Diaspora, Race, and National Desire in South Africa*, and the co-edited volume, *Teaching South Asian Anglophone Diasporic Literature* (Modern Languages Association, 2024) with Dr. Nalini Iyer. In 2015, Pallavi co-produced the prize-winning film *Peace Haven*, centering on three elderly friends contemplating death and legacy.

**Preregistration is required**

## CEA OPEN BUSINESS MEETING

5:30 - 6:15 PM / Lakeshore Salon IV

## SALA GENERAL BUSINESS MEETING

6:15 - 7:00 PM / Lakeshore Salon IV

# SPECIAL EVENTS & SPEAKERS

Saturday, March 28, 2026

## ALL-CONFERENCE LUNCHEON

12:00 - 1:15 PM / Lakeview

SPEAKER: ANDREW "A.J." HARTLEY

A.J. is the Robinson Professor of Shakespeare (Emeritus) at UNC Charlotte, where he specialized in stage theory and practice. His academic books consider the intersections of Shakespeare with contemporary dramaturgy, political theatre, millennial fiction, and geek culture. He has also authored several books on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. At the same time, A.J. is the international bestselling and award-winning author of 28 novels including the YA fantasy series *Hideki Smith, Demon Queller*. His long relationship with Japan began when he lived in Yamanashi. Today, he hosts a YouTube channel on Japanese rock music and culture.

**Preregistration is required.**



## SALA KEYNOTE & AWARDS PRESENTATIONS

4:30 - 6:00PM/ Lakeshope Salon IV

SPEAKER: AARTHI VADDE

Aarthi is the E. Blake Byrne Associate Professor of English at Duke University. She is the author of *We the Platform: How the Internet Changed Twenty-First-Century Literature*. Her first book, *Chimeras of Form: Modernist Internationalism beyond Europe*, won the American Comparative Literature Association's 2018 Harry Levin Prize. She currently serves as the President of the Society for Novel Studies and is co-founder of its podcast *Novel Dialogue*.



## SALA CELEBRATION DINNER

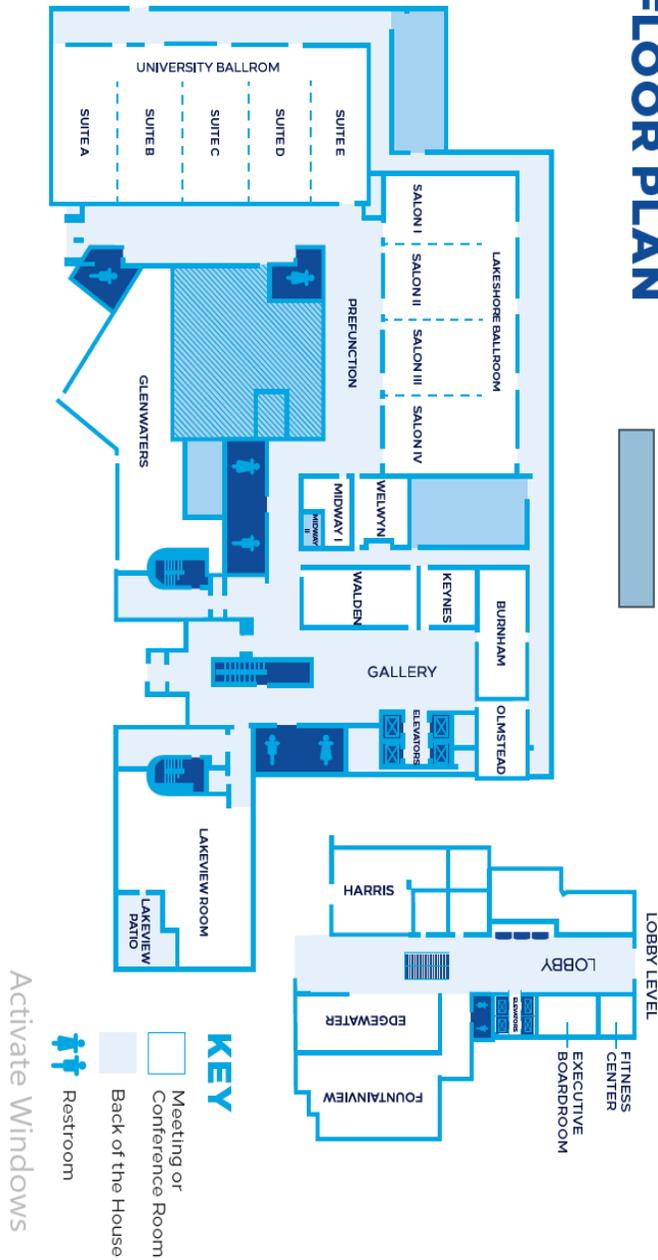
6:30 - 9:00PM/ Zafran Kebab Palace

Celebrate community and continue the conversation over delicious South Asian cuisine! All-you-can-eat vegetarian and non-vegetarian buffet at Zafran Kabab Palace. Members of SALA and CEA are welcome! **Preregistration is required.**

# FIND YOURSELF IN CLT THE CONFERENCE SPACE

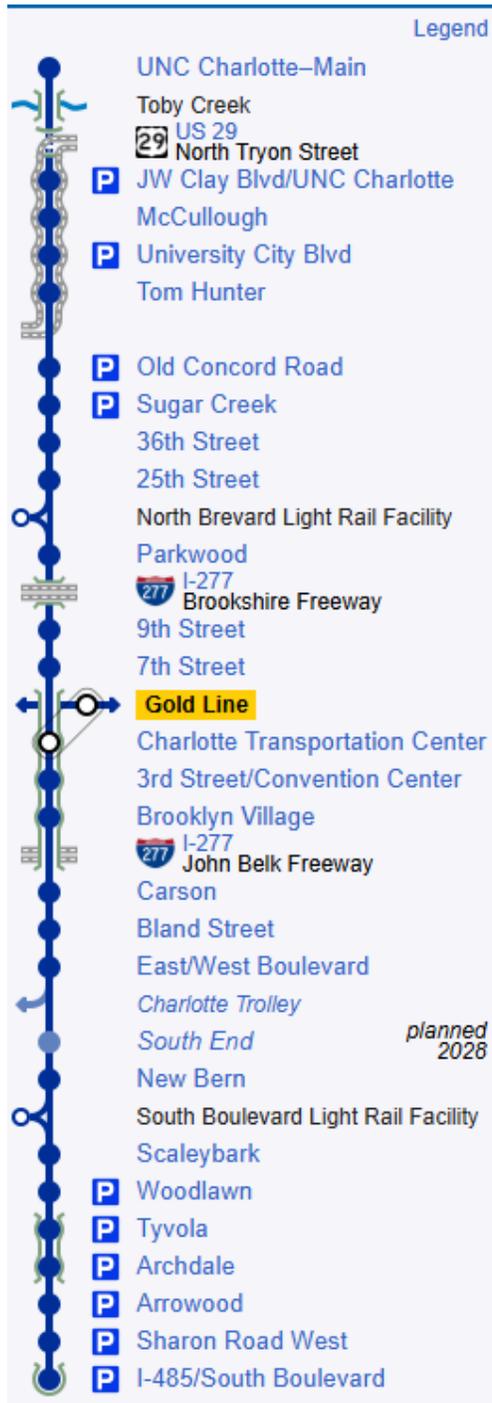
## MEETING & EVENT ROOMS

### FLOOR PLAN



# FIND YOURSELF IN CLT

## THE LYNX BLUE LINE



The **BLUE LINE** will take you to all the BEST spots in the CLT. For example, at the **36th Street Station** you can explore the fun and funky restaurants, bars and shops in the NoDa neighborhood. Or the **25th Street Station** provides access to much of Charlotte’s up-and-coming Mill District. At the **7th Street Station** there’s the Market at 7th Street, the city’s first urban food hall and retail space, or the **3rd Street Station** is the site of the convention center and the NASCAR hall of fame.

Scan the QR code for a list of each station and what you’ll find.



Learn about other LYNX lines by clicking on the QR code or the link below:



[www.charlottenc.gov/CATS/Ride/Rail](http://www.charlottenc.gov/CATS/Ride/Rail)

## CHARLOTTE NEIGHBORHOODS

The Lynx Light Rail Blue Line will take you (for a mere \$2.20) **UPTOWN**, Charlotte's hub for culture and commerce, dating back to the trade routes of the Catawba tribe. Visit one of the city's world-class museums: the Bechter Museum of Modern Art or the Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture. Showing at the Blumenthal Theater in March: **Black Girl Therapy**. Or take in some jazz at Middle C.

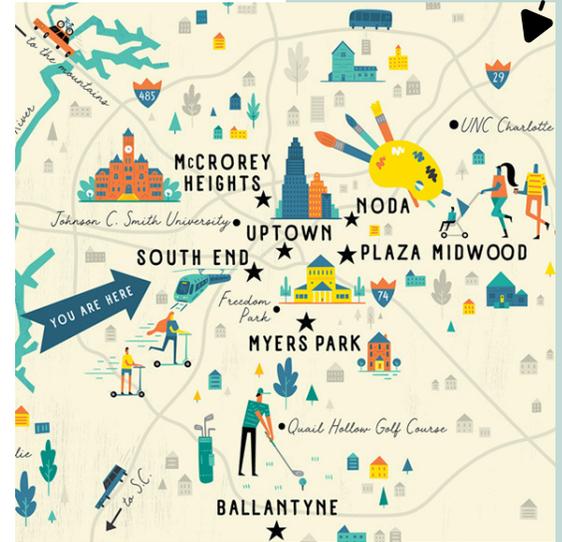
The Blue Line will also take you to other cool Charlotte neighborhoods:

- **NODA:** (North Davidson St) is the destination for eclectic restaurants, live music venues, colorful murals, and vintage and boutique shopping. If you want to explore the *NODA Beer Trail*, look here: [www.charlottesgotalot.com/trails/noda-craft-beer-trail](http://www.charlottesgotalot.com/trails/noda-craft-beer-trail)
- **SOUTH END:** a vibrant and bustling destination rooted in history and dating back to the discovery of gold (on what is now West Morehead Street) in the 1800s.
- **LOSO:** The Lower South End exemplifies what happens when a city converts underutilized industrial buildings and strip malls into restaurants, breweries, and clubs (like the *Comedy Arts Theater* and *Goldie's* for live music every night)

Click on QR code or the link below to learn about all of the city's diverse neighborhoods



[www.charlottesgotalot.com/neighborhoods](http://www.charlottesgotalot.com/neighborhoods)



# THINGS TO DO IN CLT

A quick light-rail ride away, there is much to see and do in Charlotte. Our fabulous conference hotel rate is good before and after the conference. Take some time to explore the Queen City. A great place to start is the CHARLOTTE'S GOT A LOT website. The QR code will take you to the site that lists A WHOLE LOTTA cool things to do! (Or use the link: <https://www.charlottesgotalot.com/>)



## QUIRKY STUFF TO DO

Nagini, Kaa, Satan ... get your snake fix at **Cold Blooded & Bizarre** an exotic pet store, nonprofit reptile rescue, and oddity shop where you can experience the world of reptiles. They offer animal encounters, including a meet & greet with Rock & Roll, their two headed corn snake. And if you are traveling with your reptile, they have reptile boarding. Learn more: [ps://www.coldbloodedandbizarre.com](https://www.coldbloodedandbizarre.com)



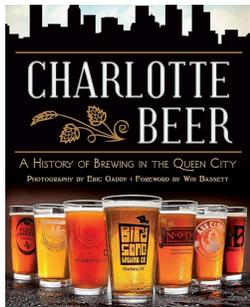
If you prefer warm and fuzzy to cold and scaly, there's **Mac Tabby Cat Café** in the lively NoDa neighborhood. The café features two distinct areas: one dedicated to serving an array of local beverages, including cold brew coffee, refreshing kombucha, and beer (of course!) while the other invites you into a cozy Cat Lounge filled with up to 12 adoptable cats eager for your affection. The cat house side does encourage reservations. Come for the conference, leave with a kitty. Learn more: <https://www.mactabby.com/>

It's more art than animals at **Camp North End**, a 75-acre former Ford factory and WWII depot that now serves as an artsy, industrial hub and an ode to art and culture. On the outside, dozens of murals decorate the walls and buildings of the complex. Sculptures constructed of artifacts from the former car factory and military depot serve as landmarks of what was once the Charlotte Area Missile Plant. Learn more here: <https://www.charlottesgotalot.com/neighborhoods/camp-north-end>

# THINGS TO DO IN CLT

## HOTEL BAR SESSIONS

The Hotel Bar Sessions podcast claims that the REAL conversations at academic conferences take place “later at the bar.” Well, Charlotte boasts more than 40 breweries where you can continue the conversation (or not). Plan a crawl using the link below. One of the best crawls is in NoDa and includes **Divine Barrel**, **Salud Cerveceria** (named Best Beer Bar in the country by *USA Today* 3 years in a row!), **Heist**, **Protagonist**, and **The Chamber**. And if beer isn't your jam, many breweries offer options including mixed drinks, ciders, and ginger beer. Prefer the fruit of the vine? Right outside the Hilton is **The Wine Vault**, where one can enjoy a wine flight, light snacks, and live music. Click the QR code to find the best bar crawls.



## FEED YOUR NEED FOR SPEED

Whether you're a die-hard racing fan or just looking to see what all the fuss is about, the Charlotte Motor Speedway is the place. This legendary venue lets you experience the roar of NASCAR engines, thrilling driving experiences, and behind-the-scenes tours of one of America's most iconic racetracks. You can take a passenger van ride around the inside and outside of the NASCAR infield, cruise around the NASCAR garages, and stroll through the winner's circle with an opportunity to take photos (\$15 per person). Learn more: <https://www.charlottemotorspeedway.com/>

## OR, visit the NASCAR Hall of Fame

This facility, down by the convention center, is a tribute to the drivers, crew members, team owners, and others who have helped establish the sport. The HoF is a high-tech experience, designed to educate and entertain race fans and non-fans alike. See NASCAR artifacts and enjoy hands-on exhibits. Learn more here: <https://www.nascarhall.com>

# TAKE A LOCAL BRAIN BREAK

While there is much to do in downtown Charlotte, there are places to explore just outside the door of our hotel and across the street at UNC Charlotte (UNCC). After a day of panels and papers, clear your head with some fresh air.

## NOT ALL 49ers ARE IN SAN FRANCISCO. RUN, JOG, OR STROLL THE CAMPUS

Just across the road from our conference hotel is North Carolina's 3rd largest university, UNC Charlotte, home of the 49ers. The campus boasts a variety of running and walking trails. Take a break and explore one of the many greenways. The QR code will take you to a 10K run that includes UNCC campus trails, the botanical garden, and a pond. You can shorten the trail or extend it as you'd like. Or just meandHate QR codes? Here's a link:<https://greatruns.com/charlotte-nc-unc-charlotte-campus-and-area-trails/>



## STOP & SMELL THE FLOWERS AT THE UNCC BOTANICAL GARDENS



The UNCC botanical gardens serve as a living classroom for biology students and as a horticultural and botanical resource for the campus and community. Although UNCC does not have a formal horticulture or botany department, the Gardens' founders believed a university campus was not complete without the educational and cultural resource of a botanical garden. (Check out the *Dinosaur Garden* with its living fossils and prehistoric vegetation. The Carnivorous and Bog collection features native plants that prey on insects.) You can visit the gardens from dawn until dusk (in Charlotte in March that's between 6:30AM and 6:30 PM). Click on the QR code or link to learn more :<https://gardens.charlotte.edu/>

## TV DINNERS



Charlotte has a bustling food scene. In fact, **Top Chef Season 23** is set in the Carolinas, with Charlotte, serving as home to the competition kitchen. Among the competitors is Charlotte's own Brittany Cochran, Executive Chef at **STAGIONI**. Now, if you are up for a little splurge (the prices are not THAT bad, say \$22-48), you can see the full menu here: <https://www.stagionict.com/menu.php>

If **QUIRKY** and **CHEAP** are more your style, and you want to venture away from University City, how about these places, visited by Guy Fiere on **Diners, Drive-Ins, and Dives**.

### **300 East**

Here, a mother-daughter team prepares sensational seasonal New American dishes and homey desserts (like a rotating ice cream sandwich) all in a historic house. It is considered one of the "gems of the Queen City." Entrees are between \$25 and \$30, but burgers and sandwiches are under \$25, as are the small plates.

300 East Boulevard / <https://www.300east.net/>

### **Cabo Fish Tacos in NoDa**

This joint started as a tiny 14-table restaurant in what was then the up-and-coming ghetto art district of NoDa. Twenty odd years later, it's a local fave and a Charlotte staple serving a selection of fresh seafood, chicken and steak, with plenty of vegetarian options as well and a huge specialty margarita menu.

Nothing more than \$17 on their menu

3201 N Davidson St / <https://www.cabofishtaco.com/charlotte/>

### **Dish**

Pure Southern Comfort from Fried Green Tomatoes to Shrimp and Grits. Pot Roast to Chicken and Dumplings. Hippie flair with Lentil Loaf and a Veggie Burger. Nothing over \$20. The location has been an Asian joint (Ho Toy Restaurant) and a Chinese laundry, It was a place called Café Dada that included a late night music venue as well as a Phat Burrito. Dish took over in 2002, added a patio in 2008, and has been thriving ever since.

1220 Thomas Avenue / <https://eatatdish.com/>

### **Intermezzo Pizzeria**

A cozy European-style café that serves traditional Serbian dishes alongside hand-tossed pizzas with homemade dough and house-made mozzarella. The eclectic menu features Serbian eats--like Eggplant Musaka or Cabbage Rolls--or pasta--like Lasagna (meat or veggie) or Bolognese--or some good-lookin' pizza from a Margherita to the Intermezzo Supreme. Everything is under \$25.

1427 East 10th Street / <https://intermezzopizzeria.com/#/>

### **Mert's Heart & Soul**

Mert's distinguishes itself from traditional soul food restaurants by offering Low Country and Gullah-inspired dishes like Low Country Shrimp Salad, Whiting or Shrimp Po'Boys, Salmon Cakes, A 3-Veggie Plate (chose from grits, black-eyed peas, collards, okra & tomatoes, and and and), Red Beans & Rice, Fried Catfish, all under \$25.

214 North College Street / <https://mertscharlotte.com/>

# EAT LOCAL

When we are scouting places for the annual CEA conference, we try to consider what is close by--not just places to visit but places to grab a quick bite that won't break the bank. This factor is especially important during these times when travel funds are few and prices are high.

Because we have all spent time in a university setting, we know that *the U-district, the Hill, the Heights, the Yard, the Ave* are places to get good fast frugal food. Here are a list of places, some right outside the door (and across the lagoon) from the Hilton and all less than one mile away. Some are less-familiar chains and some are local faves.

## Breakfast, the Most Important Meal of the Day

### **Qamaria Yemeni Coffe Co**

<http://qamariacoffee.com/>

There is every kind of coffee drink you can imagine. But it's the Yemeni treats that are the draw: honey-drizzled sweet bread, stuffed with cream cheese, known as Khalyet Al-Nahel خلية النحل in Arabic. Or try Sabaya, a layered flaky pastry, drizzled with honey.

### **Famous Toastery**

<http://www.famoustoastery.com/>

All the sweet, savory, sweet and savory breakfast classics: eggs and waffles and benedicts and burritos and mimosas.

## Lunch & Dinner (No Cocktails Until AFTER Your Paper)

### **Piada Italian Street Food**

<https://mypiada.com/locations/university-place>

A piada (or piadina romagnola) is a traditional thin Italian flatbread from the Emilia-Romagna region, often described as an Italian wrap. Yeah, it's a chain. But Italian and street food? Pasta inside a stone-grilled wrap, I mean really, it's genius.

### **City BBQ**

[https://www.citybbq.com/?](https://www.citybbq.com/?utm_campaign=GMB&utm_medium=GBM&utm_source=google)

[utm\\_campaign=GMB&utm\\_medium=GBM&utm\\_source=google](https://www.citybbq.com/?utm_campaign=GMB&utm_medium=GBM&utm_source=google)

Duh, it's Carolina! (Unless you are from Texas or Kansas City.)

### **Mezeh Mediterranean**

<https://mezeh.com/>

Bowls and wraps. And junior bowls, so you don't fill-up before your paper. FYI, there's also a **CAVA**, and these two chains are like the Montagues and the Capulets or the Hatfields and the McCoys--who stole what recipe/idea/concept from whom. Try them both: **CAVA**: <https://cava.com/locations/university-place-nc>)

# MORE LOCAL EATS

## **Raj Ki Bandi**

<https://rajkibandi.com/>

Here's my thing about food trucks--\$25 for something served in a paper boat? But how about a local food truck serving South Indian Street food (and some Indo Chinese fusion) where the most expensive item is \$15. I'll bite (and buy!)

## **Boardwalk Billy's**

<https://university.boardwalkbillys.com/#>

Right across the lagoon. Booming beer list, huge menu featuring smoked meat stuff, seafood, raw bar, and southern sides. Plus a patio.

## **Zapata's Mexican**

<https://zapatasuniversity.com/>

Also, just across the lagoon. All your Mexican faves. And margaritas. And MANGO mojitos. Please enjoy responsibly (i.e., after your paper!)

## **Korean Hot Pot & BBQ**

<https://thekpot.com/location/charlotte-nc/>

All you can eat for \$33 (including sides and appetizers). Just depends on how hungry you are, and how much you want to work. On the website there's a whole step-by-step guide to "k-potting." Who knew.

## **Crafty Crab**

<http://craftycrabrestaurant.com/>

Famous for their seafood boils. Netting, starfish, and paper towels: all the cheesy décor you want in a seafood joint.

## **Sol'Delish**

<http://www.soldelishrestaurant.com/>

A bit upscale but not too price-y. Some cool options (Baked Turkey Wings and sides!) and Sweet Potato Pound Cake, and a few vegetarian choices.

## **Banh Mi Brothers**

<https://www.banhmibrothers.com/>

Of course, banh mis, including vegetarian and vegan options. And noodle bowls. But how about Pho Fries? Or fried bananas? I'm in.

## **Le Kebab Grill**

<http://lekebab.hrpos.heartland.us/>

Everything you'd expect: pita wraps, kebabs, kofta, shawarma, gyros, plus entrees like lamb chops, grilled tilapia, and spiced chicken. Loads of vegetarian and vegan options. And knafeh.

## **Ninety's Dessert Bar**

<http://ninetydessertbar.com/>

You could have ice cream after every meal and not dent the menu. How about a Fruity Pebbles Macaroon or Chocolate Mint Macaron Sandwich. In addition to ice creams and endless toppings, there are milkshakes and affogato sundaes. And baked things. And cookies. And oh my.

## **Magic Sushi**

<https://www.magicsushinc.com/>

More than sushi and sashimi, there are rice dishes and udon noodles, and bento boxes. Everything you could want and more (for example, sake!).

"[We] can no  
other answer  
make but  
thanks,  
And thanks, and  
ever thanks..."

Please join us in 2027 for  
the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual CEA  
Conference in ...