

## Kathryn McKee Wins UM Liberal Arts Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award

On May 8, during the year-end College of Liberal Arts faculty meeting, McMullan Associate Professor of Southern Studies and associate professor of English, Kathryn McKee, received the Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award. McKee, who serves as graduate studies director for Southern Studies, previously received the CLA's Cora Lee Graham Award for Outstanding Teaching of Freshmen in 2001.

"It is easy to talk about Katie McKee's strengths as a teacher," Center director Ted Ownby said. "First, she does an impressive job dealing with graduate students with an extraordinary range of interests. Second, she has helped bring the perspective of the Global South to Southern Studies classes. Third, her expertise in interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship has made her an ideal member of team-taught classes. Finally, like all really good teachers, she listens to students, takes them and their interests seriously, and sets high standards for writing and discussion."



Becca Walton

Kathryn McKee



KEVIN BAIN

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## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN

Articles in this issue of the *Southern Register* help me deal with some of the things that make me irritated. First, sometimes I can be a little ambivalent about awards. I like to think people should pursue excellence even when no one is likely to applaud. Beyond that point, I can be downright irked by those lengthy televised awards shows that feature attractive performers and the questions of who should win, who should lose, and what they should be wearing. A second and even more mundane thing that can irritate me is the form of our university's faculty activity report which, like countless similar reports in other colleges and universities, asks faculty members to describe their accomplishments in research, teaching, and service. It's not the reporting I dislike—it's the categories themselves and their implication that research, teaching, and service are separate types of activities.

The awards mentioned in stories in this *Southern Register* point out the unique things that people at the Center are doing exceptionally well, and they are especially revealing in creative ways people break rules and confound expectations and conventional categories.

This year's student awards reveal undergraduate and graduate students addressing new topics and rethinking old and new topics. Students won awards for analyzing music and how to study it, issues of sustainability and community organizing, photography and the Global South, and questions about the politics of documentary filmmaking. Students are considering the methods of study as part of their work, questioning the questions they and past scholars have asked, and analyzing the perspectives of journalists, hoteliers, documentarians, activists, and many others.

Awards by Center faculty and staff members demonstrate the excitement in numerous forms of collaborative, convention-challenging, boundary-breaking, open-ended academic creativity. Jodi Skipper has been the lead scholar and a partner in the Back of the Big House project in Holly Springs. Documenting slavery through multiple approaches—including material culture—blurs the lines between academics and people outside the university, embodies partnerships among people who study anthropology, archaeology, and history, and, by involving students, it learns and teaches as part of the same process. Public scholarship can be challenging, complicated work, and it is exciting to see awards recognizing an ongoing project.

Jessica Wilkerson won the award for the best dissertation in US women's history for her work on women activists in Appalachia. That work is based on oral histories, a genre that in itself requires a kind of collaboration between scholars and subjects. Like the Back of the Big House project, it involves listening as well as storytelling and analyzing, and it is in significant ways a collaborative project.

The James Beard Award for *Gravy* as the year's best food magazine acknowledges the excitement that comes with communicating in multiple ways. Under the leadership of editor Sara Camp Milam of the Southern Foodways Alliance, *Gravy* brings together short articles by a wide range of writers to reach multiple audiences. It mixes photography, scholarship, and first-person writing for a lively, colorful set of experiences documenting and thinking about foodways and how to define and approach the subject. Starting in the past year, *Gravy* also included an extraordinary set of foodways podcasts produced by Tina Antolini. Thus, the award noted that the multiple eclecticism of *Gravy* may even have helped challenge many people's conceptions of what a magazine is and can do.

Finally, the College of Liberal Arts honored Katie McKee as its Teacher of the Year. Excellent teaching overcomes categories. In some cases, it may be the case that teaching exists in its own category, separate from new insights from research and even more separate from service to the world outside the classroom. But excellent teaching both incorporates scholarship and inspires it, it means

*continued on page 23*

# Answering the Career Question

## Guest Editorial

As the school year comes to a close, Southern Studies MA student Sophie Hay reflects on her first year and muses on the future.

“But, what do you want to do *after* your MA degree?” The heart-sinking question so many grad students dread. As liberal arts students we are repeatedly assured by faculty that our degrees can take us “anywhere” and that “all career doors are open” to us. However, that doesn’t make it any easier for us to decide what vocations to pursue. Unless pursuing a PhD, most graduate students don’t know the precise route they’ll take after their formal studies conclude. However, we’re continually exposed to experiences that help us understand our strengths and develop our interests. Although the “dreaded question” used to fill me with anxiety and induce nervous ramblings about impulsively invented plans, I am gradually becoming more confident about my future. Why? Because, the Southern Studies MA program is equipping me with experiences and skills that I feel will help me navigate the scary world of employment. Here’s how:

**Academic Work:** Graduate studies are extremely challenging, and the workload for a Southern Studies MA student is intense. Reading assignments push us to engage with labyrinthine scholarship, helping cultivate strong analytical skills. Writing assignments demand the development of keen research skills and the ability to present a cogent argument. Graduate students are trained to become independent and original thinkers.

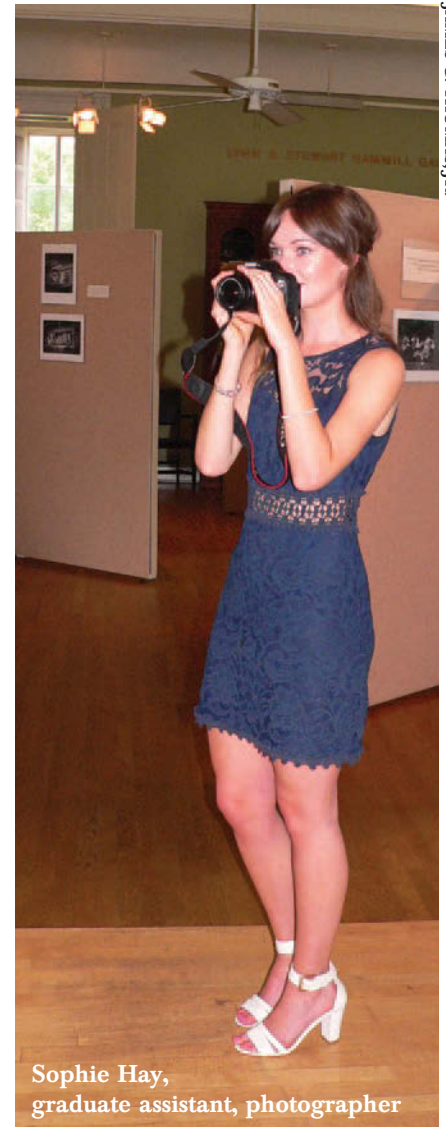
**Internships:** The Center for the Study of Southern Culture helps pair graduate students with a variety of estimable cultural organizations. While I have yet to intern, I look

forward to applying for an internship next semester. Kayla Marion, a first-year Southern Studies grad student, is currently enjoying an intern position with *Living Blues* magazine. These internships offer valuable work experience and, especially given their competitive nature, look impressive on resumes.

**Community Service and Field Work:** Southern Studies classes encourage graduate students to engage in academic work outside the classroom as well as in it. Dr. Wharton’s Documentary and Oral History class challenges students to engage in documentary fieldwork, by conducting interviews with members of the community. Dr. Skipper’s class invites students to volunteer at the Behind the Big House Project in Holly Springs, Mississippi, acting as docents to visitors touring the historic slave dwellings. These classes offer graduate students the opportunity to grow in confidence and to strengthen communication skills—assets valued by any employer.

**Assistantships:** A variety of competitive assistantships are available to graduate students, giving financial support to students working with Southern Studies staff and faculty. A graduate assistant can take on a variety of roles and learn valuable skills from their assistantship director. First-year graduate assistant Irene Van Riper is currently working as a teaching assistant in the Southern Studies 102 class led by Dr. Katie McKee and Dr. Catarina Passidomo. I am enjoying working with Becca Walton, offering assistance at Southern Studies events, acting as photographer at weekly Brown Bag lectures, and writing blog posts for the Southern Studies website.

**Conferences and Symposia:** The Center for the Study of Southern Culture plays host to a number of



Sophie Hay,  
graduate assistant, photographer

JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.

important events throughout the academic year. Last fall, for example, the SFA hosted the Southern Foodways Symposium that flooded Oxford with celebrated academics and thinkers, including Marcie Cohen Ferris and Ta-Nahesi Coates. Many of these events allow graduate students to participate in panels and, all importantly, to network with an array of notable scholars.

Ultimately, these various opportunities ensure that we will leave the Southern Studies MA program with skill sets to support us in whatever career paths we (eventually!) choose to pursue.

# Students Graduate with Bachelor and Master of Arts Degrees, Win Awards for Paper and Documentary Projects

Each year the Center gives several awards for papers and documentary projects, and the announcement is made at the Southern Studies graduation celebration. Here are the winners for 2015.

**Emelda Lee Miller**, “Makin’ Whoopee with the Devil: A Brief Contextual Analysis of Bessie Smith’s ‘Devil’s Gonna Get You,’ and Lonnie Johnson’s ‘She’s Making Whoopee in Hell Tonight,’” won the **Gray Award** for one of the best two undergraduate papers in Southern Studies classes.

**Frank Kossen**, “This Train: Railroads and the Blues,” won the **Coterie Award** for one of the best two undergraduate papers in Southern Studies classes.

**Yaeko Takada**, “Ragtime Piano: Beautiful Yet Sinful Music in the 1890s and early 1900s,” and **Chris Colbeck**, “Southern Space and Sound,” won **Peter Aschoff Prizes** for the best papers on music of the American South.

**Lauren Holt**’s exhibition in the Gammill Gallery, *At the Habana Hilton, 1958: Photographs from the Keating Collection*, won the **Ann Abadie Award** for Documentary Studies.

**Irene Van Riper**, “Towards Sustainable Community Development in the Mississippi Delta: A Review, Discussion, and Analysis of Two Public Events,” won the **Lucille and Motee Daniels Award** for the best paper (first-year winner).

**Kate Hudson**, “‘Fixin’ to Tell’: Cultural Preservation, Multiculturalism, and a Delicate Double Commitment in Appalshop’s ‘Insider’ Activism,” won the **Lucille and Motee Daniels Award** for the best paper (MA thesis winner).



JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.

Members of the graduating Master of Arts class of 2015 (l-r): Amelia Brock, Elizabeth Trollinger, Kaitlyn Vogt, Micajah Henley, Grant LaFever, Lindsey Reynolds, and Katie King. Not pictured are Lauren Holt, Shawna Felkins, Virginia Anderson, and Purvis Cornish



JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.

Two graduating Bachelor of Arts students, Hannah Threadgill and Frank Kossen



Jodi Skipper, Chelius H. Carter, and Anne Webster, presenting for the Mississippi Historical Society

## Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Southern Studies Honored with Award of Merit

On March 7, Jodi Skipper accepted the Mississippi Historical Society's Award of Merit, along with Chelius Carter, director of Preserve Marshall County and Holly Springs. The award is presented to individuals or organizations to showcase and honor their outstanding archival, historical, museum, or records management work.

Preserve Marshall County and Holly Springs was formed in 2005 "with the hope of bringing historic preservation advocacy and educational outreach to the community." Since 2012 it has organized the Behind the Big House program in Holly Springs, which aims to educate visitors on the history of the enslaved and their living areas and conditions by taking the focus off of the mansion or "big house" and exploring the housing of the enslaved people who served the families. Tours are given to visitors during the Holly Springs Home and Heritage Festival and Pilgrimage, an annual event that showcases historic homes, churches, and cemeteries in the city.

Skipper accepted the award in support of her work with the Behind the Big House Project. The key to the

project is preservation of all history, not just the grandeur and glamour of the antebellum homes. Visitors are given a look behind the scenes by touring former slave dwellings that have survived throughout the years and illustrate the distance between the privileged whites and the enslaved African Americans.

Since 2012 the program has been the major focus of Skipper's Southern heritage tourism course, in which students study cultural representations of enslaved populations and work as docent-interpreters to tourists who visit the slave dwelling sites. According to Skipper, "the entire state of Mississippi can benefit if more places like Holly Springs are willing to tell more complex histories and think about how those affect our relationships in the present. Support from institutions like the Center for the Study of Southern Culture is invaluable to these efforts."

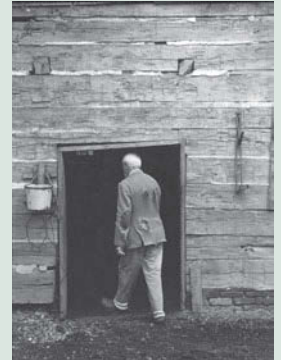
The Award of Merit is one of the 11 different awards given each year by the Mississippi Historical Society, with the Merit Award focusing on work on the historical preservation of an area.

Emily Beene

## *Faulkner's World: The Photographs of Martin J. Dain* A Traveling Exhibition

The photographs of Martin Dain provide a unique journey into the world of William Faulkner. Taken between 1961 and 1963, Dain's photographs

portray Faulkner at home as well as provide a comprehensive look at the people and cultural traditions that inspired him. This



MARTIN DAIN

collection provides an extraordinary window through which to view community history and from which to reflect on culture and change in Oxford and the surrounding area. As the exhibition discusses and interprets the legacy of William Faulkner, it also provides an opportunity to prompt community dialogue.

The exhibition opened at the University of Mississippi in 1997 and traveled for two years as part of the Faulkner Centennial Celebration, had an encore tour in 2007 in conjunction with the Mississippi Reads project administered through the Mississippi Library Commission, and is once again available, this time for libraries, museums, and cultural centers in Mississippi and surrounding states. *Faulkner's World: The Photographs of Martin J. Dain* was curated and produced by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. The exhibition has thirty-six 16" x 20" black-and-white photographs and four text panels, presented in 24" x 30" frames.

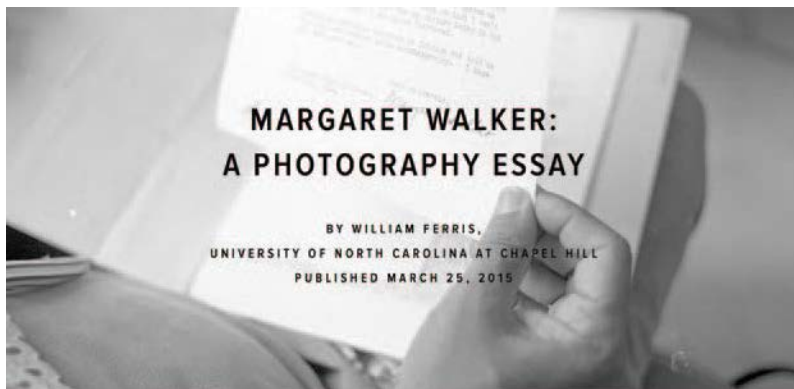
Persons interested in scheduling the traveling exhibition of Dain photographs should contact James Thomas by e-mail ([jgthomas@olemiss.edu](mailto:jgthomas@olemiss.edu)) or telephone (662-915-3374).

# Study the South Essays Published in Conjunction with Center Events

*Study the South* has published three new essays so far this year.

On March 25, in conjunction with the 2015 Oxford Conference for the Book and in honor of Mississippi writer Margaret Walker, *Study the South* published two new essays. The first, “Sister Act: Margaret Walker and Eudora Welty,” is by Carolyn J. Brown. The essay examines parallels in the two Mississippi writers’ careers and lives—and their resulting friendship. Brown recently published the first biography on Walker, *Song of My Life: A Biography of Margaret Walker*, and is the author of *A Daring Life: A Biography of Eudora Welty*.

The second is “Margaret Walker: A Photography Essay,” by William Ferris, which includes 17 photographs



that “capture two moments in Margaret’s career—a visit in the Beinecke Library at Yale University in 1978 and a reading and book signing of her *Richard Wright Daemoniac Genius: A Portrait of the Man / A Critical Look at His Work* at Square Books in Oxford, Mississippi, in 1988.” Ferris, a widely recognized leader in Southern Studies, African American music, and folklore, is the Joel R. Williamson Eminent Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and

the senior associate director of UNC’s Center for the Study of the American South.

On April 9, Karlos K. Hill, an assistant professor of African American history at Texas Tech University, delivered his essay “The Lynching Blues: Robert Johnson’s

‘Hellhound on My Trail’ as a Lynching Ballad” in conjunction with the Blues Today Symposium, held in the J. D. Williams Library on the UM campus. “The Lynching Blues,” which explores the near lynching of Robert Johnson’s stepfather, Charles Dodds, the influence that event may have had on Johnson and his music, the horrors of spectacle lynching in the late 19th and early 20th century South, and grassroots responses to this violence, was published in *Study the South* on May 11. Hill’s forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Beyond the Rope: The Impact of Lynching on Black Culture and Memory*, will be published by Cambridge University Press in 2016.

All three essays can be found on the Center for the Study of Southern Culture’s website and at southernstudies.olemiss.edu/study-the-south.

*Study the South*, founded in 2014, exists to encourage interdisciplinary academic thought and discourse on the culture of the American South, particularly in the fields of history, anthropology, sociology, music, literature, documentary studies, gender studies, religion, geography, media studies, race studies, ethnicity, folklife, and art.

Those interested in contributing to the journal should contact James G. Thomas, Jr. at [jgthomas@olemiss.edu](mailto:jgthomas@olemiss.edu).

James G. Thomas, Jr.



**SISTER ACT:**  
Margaret Walker and Eudora Welty

BY CAROLYN J. BROWN

PUBLISHED: MARCH 25, 2015

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2015 OXFORD CONFERENCE FOR THE BOOK

## THE LYNCHING BLUES

ROBERT JOHNSON'S "HELLHOUND ON MY TRAIL"  
AS A LYNCHING BALLAD

BY KARLOS K. HILL

PUBLISHED: MAY 11, 2015

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE 2015 BLUES TODAY SYMPOSIUM AT THE  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSISSIPPI

# Jessica Wilkerson, Assistant Professor of History and Southern Studies, Wins OAH Lerner-Scott Prize

Each year, the Organization of American Historians (OAH) presents the Lerner-Scott Prize for the best doctoral dissertation in US women's history. This April, Jessica Wilkerson, assistant professor of history and Southern Studies, learned that her dissertation, "Where Movements Meet: From the War on Poverty to Grassroots Feminism in the Appalachian South," had been awarded the honor. The OAH presented Wilkerson with the prize at the 2015 OAH annual meeting on Saturday, April 18, in the Renaissance Grand Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri.

About Wilkerson's dissertation, the OAH press release stated, "Where Movements Meet: From the War on Poverty to Grassroots Feminism in the Appalachian South' is a beautifully written, nuanced study of the alliances forged and the grassroots movements led by women in the Appalachian South in the 1960s and 1970s. Drawing from a wide variety of sources, including oral history interviews, archival film footage, memorabilia, local and underground publications, and manuscript collections, the dissertation shows how women shaped the federal War on Poverty in Appalachia and then used the skills they learned in antipoverty programs to foster social justice activism that continued in the 1970s and beyond. Encompassing in its analysis of class, race, gender, and geography, and deep in its probing of the lived experiences of a group of women who have been largely overlooked in the history of social movements of the 1960s, the study explores how rural, poor, and working-class women helped shape debates about welfare rights, women's rights, and labor justice in the 1960s and 1970s,



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN HISTORIANS

Jessica Wilkerson, right, with Patty Limerick at the awards ceremony in St. Louis

connecting white and black women, insiders and outsiders, to form a robust, interracial, intergenerational, and region-wide Appalachian movement. This is an engagingly presented and captivating dissertation that deserves wide readership."

When asked about her dissertation in an interview for the Summer 2014 issue of the *Southern Register*, Wilkerson said, "As I conducted oral history interviews with the people who led and participated in federal War on Poverty programs in Appalachia, I discovered a rich but overlooked history of women's organizing. The women I wrote about were key leaders and foot soldiers in what contemporaries called the Appalachian movement, which intersected with civil rights organizations and had its roots in the War on Poverty."

Wilkerson earned her MA from

Sarah Lawrence College and her PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she was advised by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall. She is currently working on a book manuscript based on her dissertation. She has worked on several oral history projects at the Southern Oral History Program (UNC), including the "Long Women's Movement in the American South" and the companion digital humanities project "Mapping the Long Women's Movement."

The Lerner-Scott Prize is named for Gerda Lerner and Anne Firor Scott, both pioneers in women's history and past presidents of the OAH. Founded in 1907, the Organization of American Historians is the largest professional society dedicated to the teaching and study of American history.

James G. Thomas, Jr.

# At the Habana Hilton, 1958

## Upcoming Exhibition to Show Photographs from Keating Collection

Beginning Friday, May 1, Southern Studies graduate student Lauren Holt exhibits photographs from the Bern and Franke Keating Collection in Barnard Observatory's Gammill Gallery. The photos on display were made at the grand opening of the Habana Hilton hotel in Havana, Cuba, in late March 1958. The exhibition is part of her thesis project, which also includes a written component stemming from research she has done to contextualize the images.

Bern and Franke Keating were from Greenville, Mississippi. A married couple, each worked as a professional photographer and writer, contributing regularly throughout their careers to publications such as *Life*, *Time*, *Look*, *National Geographic*, and the *Saturday Evening Post*. Holt came across the photographs from Havana while digitizing the Keating Collection in the University of Mississippi's Archives and Special Collections last year. As far as her research has shown, the photographs on display have never been published.

The exhibition gives viewers a look into the complex cultural and economic relationship between Cuba and the United States at the end of the 1950s—a time of political upheaval and crisis for the Caribbean nation. US tourists in Cuba are among the photographs' many subjects, providing a valuable perspective of Americans on the island before the Cuban Revolution brought its booming tourism industry to a halt. As a result of the currently changing political relationship between the United States and the Washington-alienated communist nation, these photographs are now more relevant than they have been in decades.

"For me, what's especially important about the exhibition is the way the photos make history very real—comprehensible in a new way," Holt said. "The photos were taken near the end



Afraid that the grand opening festivities would be a lightning rod for attacks by rebel groups, Hilton hired nearly one hundred private security guards to mix and mingle with guests and positioned sharpshooters on rooftops surrounding the hotel. Likewise, as seen in this photograph, a police escort accompanied the Hilton motorcade each time guests ventured out into Havana.



While Fulgencio Batista did not attend the Hilton's opening ceremony—likely because his presence would have heightened security risks—his wife, Marta Fernando Miranda de Batista, is the center of attention in this image. Meeting her, in a hat with dark flowers, is Hollywood gossip columnist Hedda Hopper.

of a long period of enormous US political, financial, and cultural presence in Cuba. What we see in them is a culmination of American cultural influence and capitalist investment in a moment when these forces were rapidly losing their bearings."

Holt sees the project as part of a larger trend in Southern Studies "to think about the US South less as a national region and more as belonging—historically, economically, culturally—to a transnational one that includes the Caribbean and areas of Latin America."

Holt grew up in South Carolina

and Georgia and attended Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington, where she received her undergraduate degree in art history and visual culture. What she likes about the Southern Studies program and what she also finds most challenging is the freedom to "chart your own course, which encourages students to explore and pursue their own interests."

On April 29, Holt gave a Brown Bag lecture in Barnard Observatory on her thesis and the Keating exhibition she curated.

Emily Beene



# Two from Center Take US South Abroad

Two Southern Studies assistant professors are getting to use their passports this summer as recipients of the Provost's Faculty Development Award for Campus Internationalization. Catarina Passidomo heads to Peru May 31–June 10 for “Peruvian Food Systems: Balancing Growth and Preservation,” and Jodi Skipper goes to Senegal June 7–17 for “Islam, Politics, and Culture in Senegal and West Africa.”

The two faculty development seminars are part of 17 different seminars in locations all around the world, each with a different theme. There are extraordinary site visits and interactions with key individuals related to the theme of the visit, providing faculty and administrators with access to the rich academics, diverse intercultural experiences, and innovative approaches to learning and problem-solving that enhance syllabi, internationalize curricula, and increase global understanding.

“I am really looking forward to this trip,” said Passidomo, assistant professor of anthropology and Southern Studies. As a scholar of Southern foodways and the connections between the US South and the Global South, Passidomo understands the importance of situating place-based scholarship within an international context. Her seminar addresses questions and concerns that have broad applicability, such as how to balance a growing interest in regional cuisine with respect for indigenous peoples and the environment. The seminar also takes a long historical view, to situate contemporary Peruvian gastronomy within the context of processes of colonialism, immigration, and cultural mixing.

Although this is her first Council on International Educational



Catarina Passidomo

JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.



Jodi Skipper

Exchange Faculty Development Seminar, she has lived, worked, and conducted research abroad and is deeply committed to international education and cross-cultural exchange. “I am confident that participating in this seminar would lay the foundation for future research. This, in turn, and perhaps most importantly, would translate into a greater capacity to teach from an international perspective,” she wrote in her application. “While ‘Southern food’ has always been a product of many places and cultures, contemporary

globalization has made Southern food and foodways representative of a changing American South. That South is increasingly connected to the Global South through the migration of individual people and cultural and material capital. While we recognize processes of globalization that bring unique cultural products to and from the US South, it is crucial that we also draw on the experiences of other places to better understand phenomena occurring in our region.”

By teaching an African Diaspora anthropology course, which centers on the transatlantic slave trade, Jodi Skipper, assistant professor of anthropology and Southern Studies, wanted a better understanding of the relationship between slavery and Islam and the Southern US. She also wanted to better understand enslavement on (not just outside) the African continent and its impact on past and present communities, she wrote in her application.

“I intend to use this experience to make the slave trade and slavery in the Arab-Islamic world more fundamental in my classroom, as well as to the broader UM community,” Skipper said. “The state of Mississippi alone has two well-known connections to Islam and black slavery. As much of this seminar will focus on contemporary Islamic politics, it is my hope that my better understanding can help to minimize essentialist notions of Muslim populations and encourage dialogue among students, faculty, and staff. Mississippi’s story is a globally connected one, and that’s a story that I would like to help tell.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

# Southern Studies Continues to Draw International Students

The Center for the Study of Southern Culture is not unfamiliar to guests and visitors from beyond US borders. Whether they be scholars, students, or enthusiasts of Southern culture in general, the Center welcomes those who come from abroad to attend conferences and symposia, to do research in the Blues Archive or Southern Media Archive, or to enroll in the undergraduate and graduate Southern Studies programs. The first international student to receive an MA in Southern Studies was from China, and students have come from, among other places, the Netherlands, Germany, Jamaica, Belize, England, Ireland, Italy, Canada, and Japan.

To make at least one partnership more formal, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture has recently entered an exchange program with the British Association for American Studies (BAAS), which sends graduating students from universities in the United Kingdom to a handful of schools in the US. For three years, the Southern Studies graduate program has participated in that student exchange.

The first student to enter the UM Southern Studies graduate program through the BAAS exchange was Jodie Free, after having earned her undergraduate degree from the University of East Anglia. That same year, in the fall of 2012, classmate and fellow Briton Rachael Walker found her way back to



COURTESY JODIE FREE

Jodie Free

the university after having spent 2010–11 studying here as an undergraduate exchange student. Walker earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Birmingham. Both

students earned their graduate degrees in Southern Studies in 2014.

"It was on my exchange year that I was pointed in Dr. Kathryn McKee's direction to work with her on an independent study on literature tied to the city of New Orleans," Walker said, "and as that work developed I completed a final paper on Vietnamese American literature. Dr. McKee had mentioned the Southern Studies master's program to me, but it wasn't until I returned home in the summer of 2011 that I really started to look at the program and consider

graduate school. I felt like I'd only begun to touch on the US South while on exchange, and when I returned home, it definitely cemented that I wanted to know more."

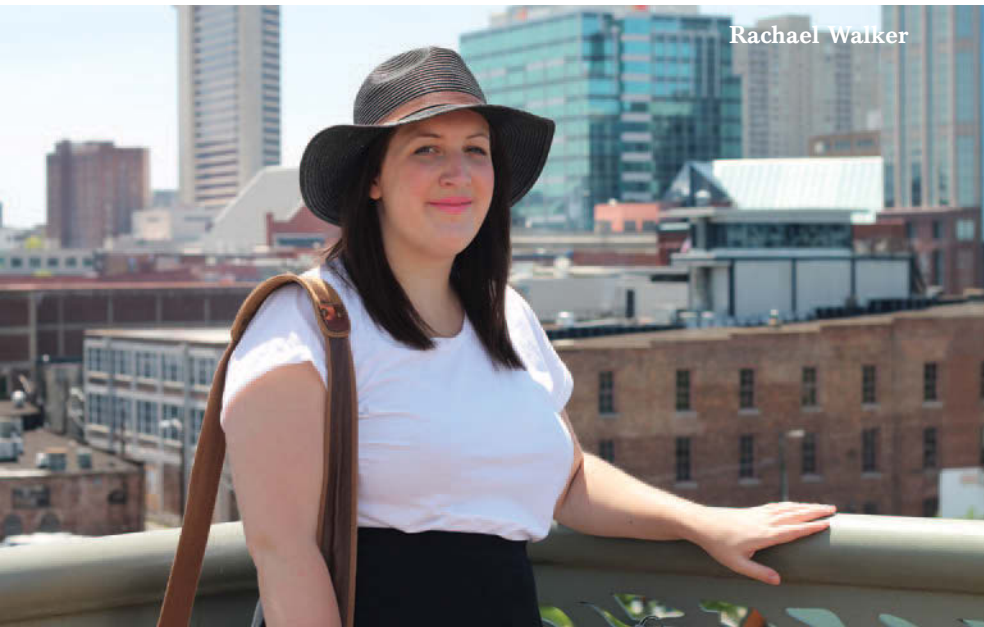
Around the same time that Walker was on exchange here in Oxford, Jodie Free was studying at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. "I had actually visited Oxford once before because I love Faulkner, and I wanted to see Rowan Oak and the places that influenced his fiction," she said. After completing her undergraduate studies, Free enrolled in the Southern Studies graduate program at UM. "The main reason the graduate program appealed to me was that I wanted an interdisciplinary approach and the freedom to study a lot of different topics. I was amazed by the scope and variety of the Center's work."

After taking her master's degree, Free moved back east to work in Spartanburg, South Carolina, as a staff writer for the online lifestyle



JAMES G. THOMAS, JR.

Sophie Hay



Rachael Walker

COURTESY RACHAEL WALKER

and culture publication *Literally, Darling*. Her position there is often informed by her having immigrated to the US. “Being an outsider gives you more distance,” she said, “which I think makes it easier to ask questions about what is natural and what is constructed. The South is so different than where I grew up; I was constantly curious about why and how certain beliefs and trends came to be. I felt like I was in a unique position, as someone who was European and English-speaking, well educated about the South but not completely part of it myself. I actually just wrote about this in an article for *Literally, Darling*, ‘Being a White Western Immigrant in the United States.’”

Free also volunteers for two Spartanburg, South Carolina, nonprofits—Partners for Active Living, a community health organization, and the Hub City Writers Project, a literary press/independent bookstore where she teaches creative writing workshops for local teenagers.

After earning her graduate degree, Walker remained in Oxford, working on the UM campus as a social media marketing assistant in the Division of Outreach and Continuing Education. Though she is returning to live in the United Kingdom at the end of May,

she said her extended time here at UM has added clarity to what she would like to do next: “My experience in the Southern Studies program and at the University has vastly helped shape what I want to do upon returning home. I would like to work in international higher education, which I know seems like a loose tie to Southern Studies, but being in the program and at the University opened up my understanding of the world. I feel like I had a more global experience here than I did during my time at my undergraduate university.”

Despite Walker and Free having graduated from the university, the British perspective is not missing from the Southern Studies program. First-year graduate student Sophie Hay took a route to the program similar to that of both Free and Walker: she spent a year at the University of Mississippi as an undergraduate exchange student from the University of Birmingham and entered the Southern Studies program as a British Association of American Studies exchange student.

Like Free and Walker before her, the pull of Oxford and the university were irresistible. “My undergraduate exchange year here gave me an

insight into the complexity of the Deep South and submerged me in its unique and compelling culture,” she said. “The history and literature classes I took at Ole Miss as an undergrad inspired me to write two Southern-based dissertations when I returned to my home university—one that assessed Richard Wright’s protest fiction and one that discussed the dissonance between the portrayal of and the actual role of Southern black women in the civil rights movement. Back home I was still drawn to the South and felt that there was much more I wanted to learn about the region. Of course, there was no better place to study the South than at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, so I applied for the master’s program.”

While being a native Southerner would seem to have certain advantages in a program that focuses on Southern culture, Hay too has found that investigating the American South from the removed perspective of a foreign culture has benefits of its own: “I think having an outsider’s perspective means that you pick up on things that natives might take for granted. My outsider’s point of view has helped me articulate a transnational connection between the South and the UK in class discussions about the Global South.”

Three years ago, Shanghai, China, native Xiang Xu entered the program with a strong interest in old-time country music. Known as Bob, he completed the MA degree in 2014 and is now a PhD student in the UM History Department.

And the co-winner of this year’s Peter Ashoff award for best paper in Southern music is Yaeko Takada, a native of Japan who came to Southern Studies to understand and write about Southern music. Eko’s prize-winning paper studies the roots of ragtime, the likely subject of her thesis.

James G. Thomas, Jr.

# Class on the South and Sexuality Offered First Summer Term

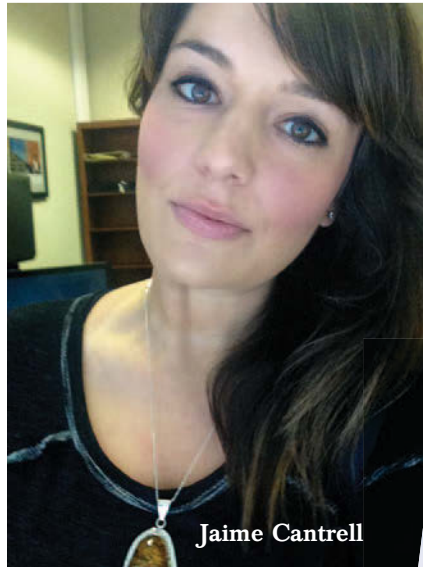
Students can explore the rise of Southern sexuality through texts thematically preoccupied with gay, lesbian, and queer desires, acts, and behaviors in Southern literature this summer.

SST 350/GST 337: The South and Sexuality is being offered at 10:00 a.m. in the first summer session and will be taught by Jaime Cantrell, visiting assistant professor in the Department of English and the Sarah Isom Center for Women's and Gender Studies. Cantrell gave a paper presentation at the Center last fall titled "Put a Taste of the South in Your Mouth: Carnal Appetites and Intersexuality," and a portion of her paper will be published in *Study the South*, the Center's online journal, this summer.

Cantrell earned her BA in English from the University of Southern Mississippi, her MA in women's studies from the University of Alabama, and her PhD in English with a graduate certificate in women's and gender studies from Louisiana State University. Her research and teaching interests focus on how queer and feminist theories illuminate and complicate the intersections between canonical and obscure, queer and normative, and regional and national narratives.

According to Cantrell, rather than separating sexuality as a category to be studied on its own, this course will demonstrate how sexuality functions as the entry point to understanding a wider web of connections between gender, race, class, politics, and culture—calling for regional identity to be put in dialogue with sexual identity.

"The advent of New Southern Studies—and its nascent emphasis on sexuality as an organizing principle of social relations—has focused almost exclusively on mid-century texts from the Southern Renaissance, largely neglecting post-1970 queer literatures," Cantrell said. "At the same



Jaime Cantrell

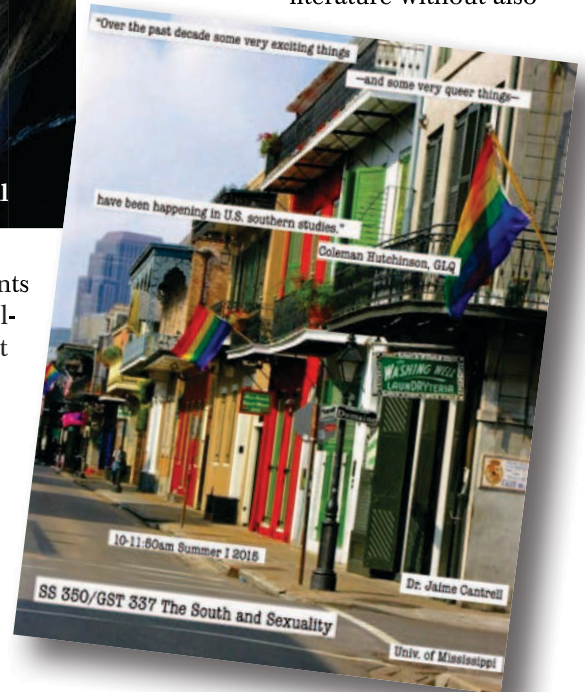
time, despite these developments in Southern Studies, most scholarship in women's and feminist studies continues to ignore the South, or worse, demonize the South as backward, parochial, and deeply homophobic. This seminar offers a unique opportunity, and an increasingly rare one, for us to create an embodied classroom devoted to the collective consideration of texts and ideas. This is the work of thinking with one another."

Multigenre texts used in the course include works by Dorothy Allison, Truman Capote, Thomas Hal Phillips, Carson McCullers, Minnie Bruce Pratt, Jane Chambers, Tennessee Williams, Kevin Sessums, and Doris Davenport.

Cantrell chose these authors because they shift tensions from non-normative to new normative ideas of community building during what is arguably the most significant period in queer literary productions to date.

"As the fights for women's liberation and civil rights and the emergence of the homophile movement coalesced in the United

States, many of Southern writers made sexuality an explicit literary theme in their literary productions," she said. "They also made Southern culture and Southern community central to the critical and political perspectives of their works. We cannot understand expressions of non-normative sexualities in post-Stonewall-era American literature without also



understanding the explicitly Southern dynamics of those writings."

Although literary and critical analysis can be difficult, this is both its pleasure and its challenge. "In the end, we come to literature to better understand ourselves—and all the spaces and places, woods and fields, halls and homes, and acres and avenues in which we exist," Cantrell said.

Cantrell's new book, *Out of the Closet, into the Archives: Researching Sexual Histories*, will be published by SUNY Press's Queer Politics and Cultures series in December 2015.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

# A Call to Service

## Caroline Gillespie Continues a Family Tradition

As the executive assistant for the Mississippi Humanities Council (MHC), Caroline Gillespie is able to do a bit of everything, which she appreciates because it allows her to get to know all the operations better.

“I assist with several of the MHC’s council-conducted programs, like our grants program and our Speakers Bureau program, which include corresponding with speakers, grantees, and institutions, as well as scheduling dates and lining up events,” said Gillespie, who earned a BA in history and Southern Studies with a Spanish minor in 2013.

According to its website, the MHC “sponsors, supports, and conducts a wide range of programs designed to promote understanding of our cultural heritage, interpret our own experience, foster critical thinking, encourage reasonable public discourse, strengthen our sense of community, and thus empower Mississippi’s people with a vision for the future.”

“We are currently ramping up a new council-conducted program called the Telling Project, which is a veterans program that we will produce throughout central and southern Mississippi later in 2015, so that is beginning to take up a lot of my time and has been a really exciting program on which to work.”

With funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Bob Woodruff Foundation, and other major foundations, the Telling Project provides veterans a unique opportunity to share their military experiences with their communities through oral histories.

Gillespie also helps plan events and assists with the MHC’s social



media push. She says that no day is the same and that every project is different. “It definitely doesn’t allow things to get boring, and it gives me a chance to meet lots of great people throughout the state,” she said.

In August 2014, after working for a year on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., Gillespie returned to Jackson. Before her move to D.C., Stuart Rockoff, executive director of the Mississippi Humanities Council, had worked with Gillespie when she interned at the Institute of Southern Jewish Life. “When I heard that she was looking to move back to Mississippi, I moved quickly to hire her at the Humanities Council,” said Rockoff, who has been director since 2013. “I knew firsthand how great she was and what an asset she would be to our work. Without her help, major Council initiatives like our annual awards dinner, our

speaker’s bureau program, our Humanities Teacher Awards, and the Telling Project would not be possible.”

Gillespie knew when she arrived at the university that she wanted to be involved in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture’s work and to major in Southern Studies. While a student, she won the Gray Award in 2012 for a paper she wrote in Charles Reagan Wilson’s SST 401 class titled “Felder Rushing as a Creative, Unconventional Southern Gardener,” and again in 2013 for her Honors College thesis, “Parallels in Plight: Finding Commonalities in African American and Latino Experiences in Post-Katrina New Orleans.”

“Both sides of my family have strong ties to Mississippi politics and history—my grandfather William Winter served

as governor of Mississippi from 1980 to 1984 and held various statewide political offices throughout his career,” she said. “Because of that, I grew up with a very strong love of and appreciation for the state’s culture, history, and everything that goes along with it—both the good and the bad. When I got to college, the Center was the perfect way for me to expand on these interests and explore the South beyond Mississippi by learning about the broader themes that connect the South, the challenges it has faced, the wonderful and varied cultures it has produced, and the path it faces as we head into the future.”

Outside of work, she loves reading Southern literature and traveling. As this story was being written, Gillespie was traveling in Germany and Austria.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



# Middendorf's and Manchac

## SFA's Latest Oral History Project Documents Catfish and Community on Lake Ponchartrain

When Josie and Louis Middendorf opened Middendorf's Restaurant in 1934, Manchac, Louisiana, was a small but thriving fishing village. A canal served as a main thoroughfare until the interstate system came through, moving homes and waters with it. Manchac was always too small to have a school. Kids were bussed instead to Ponchatoula and LaPlace—and then they would return to their pirogues, their palmetto shacks or houses built on pylons, their bathing-suit summers, their lives on the water.

For roughly its first 20 years Middendorf's was one of several local restaurants, all of them seafood focused. Work lay literally out a fisherman's front door: the village clusters along both banks of Pass Manchac.

Catfish, shrimp, and crabs are the most prominent and beloved catches, but these Louisiana waters of shifting salinity and their adjacent swamps support all kinds of marine life.

At Reno's Seafood market, which still operates steps from Middendorf's, Dunk Reno also sells locally caught snapping turtles, crawfish, alligator, frog legs, bait of all kinds, and whatever fresh fish comes off the boats. His son, Hayden, is one of Manchac's last commercial fishermen. While neither man predicts a resurgence of the fishing industry here, both brim with a love of place and an optimism that, as long as the waters remain, so shall Manchac.

It's not entirely accurate to say that Middendorf's and Manchac are one and the same today—Dunk Reno's

market, the sandwich shop Fatboy's Seafood Kitchen (operated by Hayden Reno's wife, Debbie), and a strong recreational fishing industry contribute significantly to the local economy. But Middendorf's is indeed the town's calling card, a community anchor, and by all accounts it was from the beginning.

Roughly 2,500 customers pass through Middendorf's on a typical, non-holiday Sunday. The kitchen processes about 2,000 pounds of catfish fillets a week, not to mention the bowls of turtle soup, stuffed crab platters, broiled oysters, and fried chicken dinners.

Visit the Southern Foodways Alliance website, [www.southernfoodways.org](http://www.southernfoodways.org), to explore the full oral history project.

# Jake Fussell Releases Debut Album

Jake Xerxes Fussell's self-titled solo debut album showcases his folk and blues roots. The Southern Studies alum (MA 2013) says that the album came together fairly easily, with most of the basic tracking done one afternoon at Bruce Watson's studio in Water Valley, Mississippi, with tracking and mixing at Mark Nevers's studio in Nashville.

"All in all it was pretty quick, as far as record making goes, at least by current standards," said Fussell, who sings and plays guitar. It was made easier for him since he knew exactly what 10 songs he wanted on the album, but what was a surprise for Fussell was seeing how several colleagues contributed in their own ways.

"That part was fascinating to watch, and I was really surprised and pleased with the way they all turned out," said Fussell, whose producer was William Tyler. "A lot of people go into the studio with the best intentions and great songs, but the focus gets diverted." Although he said he doesn't have a favorite song on the album, he does like the way the song "Push Boat" turned out.

Growing up in Columbus, Georgia, Fussell soaked up the eclectic inspirations all around him, especially from folk and blues singer Precious Bryant, who played Piedmont style guitar. "It's hard to estimate the influence of Precious Bryant on my life and music," Fussell said. "She was close to my family so we had a personal kind of friendship in addition to playing music together. We traveled together some and had some funny adventures here and there."

When he was a teenager, Fussell would drive to Bryant's home in Talbot County, Georgia, every week and play music with her and her son Tony. "She wasn't a mentor in any formal sense, but we played a lot together, and in order for me to keep up with her musically I had to think quick

and watch what she was doing and try to do it myself," Fussell said. "I probably didn't realize it at the time, but that's really the best way to learn and develop as a musician."

In addition to outside factors, there were forces at work as home, too, with his parents, Fred and Cathy Fussell. "My parents are both creative, folklorically minded people, so my sister, Coulter, and I grew up with all of that," Fussell said. "There were all these people dropping by the house all the time. People like Roland Freeman, the photographer and poet from Washington, D.C., and his friend Worth

Long, the great folklorist and SNCC activist. And, of course, people like the writer and blues documentarian George Mitchell and the painter and musician Art Rosenbaum and his wife, Margo, who's a great photographer and banjo player."

When he was around 13 years old, Fussell got into fingerpicking on the guitar. "It came from that initial fascination from hearing great music firsthand. I'm still seeking out what

I can, though my interests have probably evolved and changed to some degree, but it's still guided by that initial spark."

Fussell is also at work on a project with blues scholar Scott Barretta, wading through

hundreds of Bill Ferris's field recordings for Dust-to-Digital Records, a record label out of Atlanta that specializes in historical anthologies. "I felt that Jake was perfect for the job of going through Bill Ferris's massive archives because I know no one else who has that much experience listening to raw folklore tapes," said Barretta.

Fussell, who spends his days working at Flyleaf Books in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, returns to Oxford to play a free concert in the Grove on the UM campus on Sunday, June 21, at 7:00 p.m. The concert is sponsored by the Center and is part of the Summer Sunset Series.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



BRAD BUNYEA



Jake Xerxes Fussell

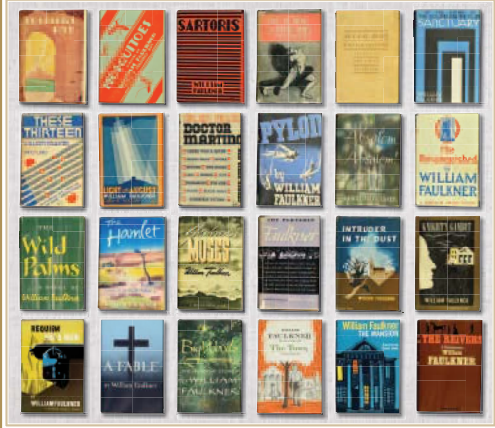
# Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha 2015

## “Faulkner and Print Culture”

An international group of scholars, teachers, students, and other Faulkner enthusiasts will join five keynote speakers for the “Faulkner and Print Culture” conference, July 19–23, 2015, at the University of Mississippi. January’s call for papers yielded an additional 11 conference sessions featuring 34 speakers, many of them appearing at Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha for the first time.

Panel topics for “Faulkner and Print Culture” will include the following: “Faulkner’s Collaborators,” “Print Culture and the Discourses of History, Law, and Medicine,” “Faulkner and the Little Magazine,” “The Letter and the Image: Print Culture as Medial Interface,” “Faulkner and the Popular Magazine,” “Pulp Faulkner,” “Composition and Revision,” “Sound, Vision, Print,” “Translation and Tastemaking,” “Print and the ‘Potboiler’: Faulkner’s Popular Perception,” and “Middlebrow Faulkner.”

This year’s panelists include Carolina Alvarado (Princeton University), Zainah Asfoor (University of Texas at Dallas), Serena Blount (University of Alabama), Elizabeth Cornell (Fordham University), Matthew Dischinger (Louisiana State University), John N. Duvall (Purdue University), Amy Foley (University of Rhode Island), Kristin Fujie (Lewis & Clark College), Sarah E. Gardner (Mercer University), Sarah Gleeson-White (University of Sydney), Laura Goldblatt (University of Virginia), Taylor Hagood (Florida Atlantic University), Jaime Harker (University of Mississippi), Alexander Howard (University of New South Wales), Christian Howard (University of Virginia),



**FAULKNER AND PRINT CULTURE**

The University of Mississippi  
Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference  
Oxford, Mississippi, July 19–23, 2015

The University of Mississippi announces the Forty-Second Annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference. The conference is sponsored by the Department of English and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and coordinated by the Office of Outreach and Continuing Education.

For more information: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, Office of Outreach and Continuing Education, Post Office Box 1848, The University of Mississippi, University, MS 38677-1848. Telephone: 662-915-7283. Fax: 662-915-5158. Internet: [www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/ Faulkner](http://www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/ Faulkner)

Kristi Rowan Humphreys (Texas Tech University), M. Thomas Inge (Randolph-Macon College), Jay Ingrao (University of Texas, Dallas), Robert Jackson (University of Tulsa), Mary Knighton (Aoyama Gakuin University), Michael Lahey (University of Alberta), Fabio Mariano (State University of Campinas, Brazil), Peter Miller (University of Virginia), Jennifer Nolan-Stinson (North Carolina State University), Peter Lurie (University of Richmond), Anne MacMaster (Millsaps College), Richard Moreland (Louisiana State University), Christopher Rieger (Southeast Missouri State University), Tim A. Ryan (Northern Illinois University), Melanie M. Sherazi (University of California, Riverside), Matthew R. Vaughn (Jefferson College), Ian Whittington (University of Mississippi), Yung-Hsing Wu (University of Louisiana

at Lafayette), and Michael Zeitlin (University of British Columbia).

The evening session for the conference’s opening day on Sunday, July 19, will feature a reading and remarks by Greg Perkins, author of the forthcoming novel *The Announcer*. Perkins is a longtime attendee and friend of Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha. *The Announcer*, his debut novel, is the first volume in a 19-novel series, *Darkness before Mourning*, to be published by Chatwin Books.

In addition, bookseller and rare-book collector Seth Berner will offer a presentation on “Collecting Faulkner” at a special lunchtime session on Monday, July 20; three scholars from the Digital Yoknapatawpha project, Stephen Railton (University of Virginia), Joost Burgers

(Queensborough Community College), and Theresa Towner (University of Texas at Dallas), will provide a progress report on the project at a lunchtime session on Tuesday, July 21; and W. Kenneth Holditch (University of New Orleans, emeritus) will speak on Faulkner at a third lunchtime session scheduled for Wednesday, July 22, at the J. D. Williams Library.

For registration and other conference information, visit the Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha website at [www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/ Faulkner](http://www.outreach.olemiss.edu/events/ Faulkner) or contact conference director Jay Watson at [jwatson@olemiss.edu](mailto:jwatson@olemiss.edu). Discount rates for the conference are available for groups of five or more students. Inexpensive dormitory housing is available for interested registrants. Contact Justin Murphree at [jcmurphr@olemiss.edu](mailto:jcmurphr@olemiss.edu) for details.

Jay Watson



# Living Blues News

I didn't set out to do a "women of the blues" issue, but like many other issues, the theme emerged organically in the process. First, Roger Wood pitched a story to me on vocalist Jewel Brown. Then, Justin O'Brien told me about playing bass with Chicago singer Ardella Williams, and he thought she would make an interesting story since she is Jazz Gillum's daughter. Next, Barry Lee Pearson and I were talking about our next cover, the Holmes Brothers, and he mentioned he had interviewed Jesi Terrell. That's three. Finally, when I mentioned the stories to Lee Hildebrand he asked if he could do something on Dianna Greenleaf and one on a local talent he was big on, Terri Odabi.

As the stories came together one theme became obvious. They were all about women of strength—powerful women who had faced adversity in their lives, but who had persevered. Each of the women had a compelling story to tell, and as I read them the common thread of strong, focused women overcoming obstacles, dealing with the challenges of life—especially those that many women face simply because they are women—became clear. As you read these stories I hope that you are not only introduced to a number of artists you may not be familiar with, but also that you take away a sense of the strength these women possess. I found myself reflecting on the strong women in my life and giving thanks. Perhaps you will too.

Just a few days before we went to press I got word that pioneering blues scholar Samuel Charters died on March 18. Sam Charters's writings about the blues have influenced generations of blues fans and scholars. His first book, *The Country Blues*, published in 1959, interjected an excitement about rural blues music into the burgeoning 1960s folk revival movement. With his self-proclaimed, nonacademic, and somewhat romanticized style of writing, Charters

sparked the desire of young blues fans and researchers to hit the back roads and go find the men and women who actually made the music. Fans like Dick Waterman and musicians like John Fahey, Alan Wilson, and Henry Vestine were disciples. They took up the search, tracking down scores of prewar blues performers such as Bukka White, Skip James, and Son House—all of whom went on to have revival careers that influenced a generation of musicians big and small.



Charters's scholarship, which encompassed more than 50 years, was vast as well as diverse. He continued to research and write about the blues his entire life, penning several other blues classics, including *The Poetry of the Blues* (with photographs from his wife, Ann Charters), *The Bluesmen*, and *The Roots of the Blues*, while also writing several books about his other musical love, jazz. He also wrote fiction (*Jelly Roll Morton's Last Night at the Jungle Inn*, *Elvis Presley Calls His Mother after the Ed Sullivan Show*, and more), poetry, and two books with his wife about the Beat Generation. He was the producer behind the influential *Chicago: The Blues Today!* series of records on Vanguard,

as well as records for Folkways and recordings by Country Joe and the Fish. Charters's field work included recordings of Joseph Spence, Lightnin' Hopkins, J. D. Short, the Mardis Gras Indians, and others.

Recently, Charters wrote books on the music of the African Diaspora and New Orleans Jazz, and two more of his books are scheduled to be published later this year.

Sam Charters's influence on blues scholarship cannot be overestimated. His books are in the libraries of anyone who takes blues seriously. His voice will be missed.

Brett J. Bonner

# Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters Announces Winners

The Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters (MIAL) has announced its award winners for works first published, performed, or shown in the year 2014. The award recipients, chosen by out-of-state judges prominent in their respective fields, will be honored at the annual awards banquet to be held this year at the Lake Terrace Convention Center in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on Saturday, June 6, 2015. At 1:30 p.m. on June 6, readings and signings by MIAL award winners will take place at Ogletree House at the University of Southern Mississippi.

The Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award winner is the painter Sammy Britt, a native of Ruleville, Mississippi, who resides in Cleveland after a long career as professor of drawing and painting at Delta State University. Britt received his BFA in painting from the Memphis Academy of Arts and his MFA in painting from the University of Mississippi. In 1963 Britt began studying with Henry Hensche at the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and he continued studying him for 25 years. Britt has won many awards in competitive shows throughout his long career and has served as a juror for shows in several states. He was featured at the Lauren Rogers Museum of Art in Laurel, Mississippi, in a show entitled *A Painter's Painter: Charles Webster Hawthorne; The Influence of Provincetown and Henry Hensche on Sammy Britt, Gerald DeLoach, Richard Kelso, and George T. Thurmond* in 1999. Britt received the Kossman Outstanding Teacher Award at Delta State and was also named professor emeritus of art there. He continues to paint and to teach workshops in the tradition of Henry Hensche.

Elizabeth Spencer is the winner of the Fiction Award for her collection of nine stories entitled *Starting Over*. Born in Carrollton, Mississippi, Elizabeth Spencer received her AB

from Belhaven and her MA from Vanderbilt University. Winner of numerous awards, such as the PEN/Malamud Award for Short Fiction, Thomas Wolfe Award for Literature, the John Dos Passos Award for Literature, and the Award of Merit Medal for the Short Story from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Spencer is the author of nine novels, eight collections of short stories, a memoir, and a play. She was the 2009 winner of the MIAL Lifetime Achievement Award.

Winner of the Nonfiction Award is Dennis Mitchell for his work *A New History of Mississippi*, the first comprehensive history of Mississippi since a bicentennial history was published in 1976. Mitchell, of Lauderdale, Mississippi, is the head of the Division of Arts and Sciences and professor of history at Mississippi State University in Meridian. Mitchell holds an MA and a PhD from the University of Mississippi. He is the author of three other nonfiction works.

Tim Earley, a visiting assistant professor of English at the University of Mississippi, is the Poetry Award winner for his collection entitled *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*. This is the Oxford resident's third collection of poems. Earley holds an MFA in creative writing from the University of Alabama.

Chosen for the Photography Award is Maude Schuyler Clay of Sumner, Mississippi, for her book *Delta Dogs*. After attending the University of Mississippi and the Memphis Academy of Arts, Clay worked for the photographer William Eggleston. She has also worked as a photography editor and photographer for *Esquire*, *Fortune*, *Vanity Fair*, and the *Oxford American*.

Brandon Moon is the winner of the Visual Arts Award for *10 Works by Brandon Moon*. A native of Jackson, Mississippi, Moon holds a BFA in painting from Delta State University

**Mississippi Institute of Arts & Letters**

**36th Annual Awards**  
Celebrating Our 2015 Winners  
**Saturday, June 6**  
Lake Trace Convention Center  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

**Fiction**  
Elizabeth Spencer  
*Starting Over*

**Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement Award**  
Sammy Britt

**Poetry**  
Tim Earley  
*Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*

**Photography**  
Maude Schuyler Clay  
*Delta Dogs*

**Music Composition (Popular)**  
Water Liars  
*Water Liars*

**Music Composition (Classical)**  
Crafton Beck  
*Passage*

**Nonfiction**  
Dennis J. Mitchell  
*A New History of Mississippi*

**Visual Art**  
Brandon Moon  
*10 Works by Brandon Moon*

Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters  
P.O. Box 2346 • Jackson, MS 39215  
662-523-0899 • [www.ms-arts-letters.org](http://www.ms-arts-letters.org)

and continued his study in the graduate painting program at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Savannah, Georgia. His work has been featured in shows in New York, Mississippi, and Ohio.

The winner of the Music Composition Award (Classical) is Crafton Beck of Jackson, Mississippi, for *Beck's Passage*. Beck currently serves as music director and conductor of the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra and the Lima Symphony Orchestra in Ohio. He holds a Doctor of Music Arts degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and has studied at the University of Michigan, Ohio State University, and the Aspen School. Beck has appeared as guest conductor with more than 30 symphony orchestras.

Water Liars, an Oxford, Mississippi, rock band, has won the Musical Composition Award (Popular) for their third album, *Water Liars*.

For information about attending this year's awards banquet, visit the MIAL website at [www.ms-arts-letters.org](http://www.ms-arts-letters.org).

Mary S. Thompson

## News Bites from the Southern Foodways Alliance

- Oral historian Sara Wood won a Schlesinger Library Oral History Grant from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University. The grant will allow her to travel to Virginia to continue oral history interviews with women oyster shuckers on the Chesapeake Bay.
- *Gravy*, the SFA's quarterly journal and biweekly podcast, received the James Beard Foundation Award for publication of the year. Pictured are John T. Edge, Sara Camp Milam, and Tina Antolini at the awards ceremony in New York City on April 24.



KEN GOODMAN

(l-r) Tina Antolini, host and producer of *Gravy* podcast, Sara Camp Milam, editor of *Gravy* quarterly, and John T. Edge, director of the SFA.

- The SFA thanks outgoing Nathalie Dupree Graduate Fellows Lindsey Reynolds and Virginia Anderson for their work and wishes these newly minted MAs best of luck. During their time with the SFA, Lindsey and Virginia volunteered at the fall symposium, contributed blog posts to the SFA website, indexed our films and oral histories, and much more.

# Mark Your Calendars!

**June 21**

Sunset Concert with Jake Fussell  
The Grove at the  
University of Mississippi

**June 25–27**

SFA Summer Symposium  
New Orleans, Louisiana

**July 12–17**

SFA Oral History Workshop  
University of Mississippi

**July 19–23**

Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha  
Conference  
“Faulkner and Print Culture”  
University of Mississippi and  
Oxford, Mississippi

**September 9**

Gilder-Jordan Lecture in Southern  
History with Theda Perdue  
University of Mississippi

**September 10–11**

Pop Goes the Corn: 2015 Graduate  
Student Conference on  
Food and Pop Culture  
University of Mississippi

## Save the Date!

The 23rd Annual Oxford  
Conference for the Book  
March 3–5, 2016

Southern Documentary Festival  
March 31–April 2, 2016

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Emily Beene** is a public relations intern for the Center. She is currently pursuing a BA in integrated marketing communications with a minor in business administration.

**Brett J. Bonner** is the editor of *Living Blues* magazine.

**Rebecca Lauck Cleary** is the Center's senior staff assistant and website administrator. She received a BA in journalism from the University of Mississippi and is currently at work on her MA in Southern Studies.

**Sophie Hay** is a master's degree candidate in Southern Studies.

**Ted Ownby**, director of the Center, holds a joint appointment in Southern Studies and history.

**James G. Thomas, Jr.** is the Center's associate director for publications.

**Mary S. Thompson** is a board member of the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters. She lives in Clarksdale, Mississippi.

**Becca Walton** is the Center's associate director for projects.

**Jay Watson** is a professor of English at the University of Mississippi and director of the Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference. His publications include *Forensic Fictions: The Lawyer Figure in Faulkner, Faulkner and Whiteness*, and *Reading for the Body: The Recalcitrant Materiality of Southern Fiction, 1893–1985*.

**Irene Van Riper** is a master's degree candidate in Southern Studies. She earned her BA in anthropology from the University of California, Santa Cruz in 2012.

**David Wharton** is the Center's director of documentary studies and assistant professor of Southern Studies.

# READING THE SOUTH

Book Reviews and Notes by Faculty, Staff, Students, and Friends of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

## *Lead Belly: The Smithsonian Folkways Collection*

Produced by Jeff Place and Robert Santelli. Text by Jeff Place, introduction by Robert Santelli. Smithsonian Folkways Recordings, 2015. 140 pages. \$89.98 large-format book, 5 CDs.

Huddie Ledbetter wrote and recorded hundreds of songs in his lifetime, many of which scholars and laypeople alike agree represent the roots of American folk and popular music. Ledbetter made these songs from his experiences growing up in a rural African American community in northwest Louisiana, his time in the Texas and Louisiana penal systems, his work for John and Alan Lomax as a driver and song scout through the South, and his later work in New York City's folk music scene and nascent civil rights communities. Ledbetter's musical repertoire, life experiences, and musical legacy from the year of his birth in 1888 to his death in 1949, and the continued relevance of his life in 2015, together serve as a lens through which 127 years of American history can be better understood.

This latest and most extensive body of work detailing the life and legacy of Huddie Ledbetter, known to most as Lead Belly, reflects that sense of lasting relevance. The sheer breadth of the volume and the extensive media publicity that accompanied its February 24 release demand attention. In 140 pages of text and photography, and five hours of music, Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and producers Jeff Place and Robert Santelli have crafted a



thoughtful and articulate reflection on Ledbetter's life and the lasting value of his biography and musical legacy on American people and culture.

The volume's musical selections span Ledbetter's entire recording career and include 16 previously unreleased recordings, with song notes accompanying each track listing. Where previous collections have tended to focus on one song type or genre that represent Ledbetter as a reflection of folklore and pop culture narratives, this musical selection conveys the perspective that Ledbetter was a professional collector of songs, a songster who added to his repertoire as he lived and experienced events in his life. Including early recordings he made for the Library of Congress and Alan Lomax, Moses Asch and Folkways recordings, WNYC radio broadcasts, and selections from his Last Sessions recordings, this broad selection of material reflects Ledbetter's equally vast knowledge of and fascination with American and international musical traditions.

To supplement the music and track notes, Smithsonian Folkways has partnered closely with the Lead Belly Estate, the John Reynolds Collection, and other private collectors to publish hundreds of

photographs of Ledbetter and related materials, including letters, concert program notes, newspaper articles, postcards, telegrams, album covers, concert tickets, lyric transcriptions, and original acetate discs. Like the musical selections for the volume, the photographs also span Ledbetter's life and suggest the far reaches of his musical and cultural legacy. From the earliest known photograph of Ledbetter (1918) to a color photograph of him in his last year (1949), the photographs show him dressed "to the nines with perfectly polished shoes," as Place describes. This self-representation of Ledbetter as a professional musician—as his friends and family knew him—has been contradicted over the years by misrepresentations depicting him as an exaggeration of the various musical identities he used to further his career (the convict, the cowboy, and the minstrel, for example). As a volume that Santelli claims is "the definitive Lead Belly collection," the visual material accompanying the musical and written work certainly conveys a balanced and realistic sense of Ledbetter's own professional and personal identities.

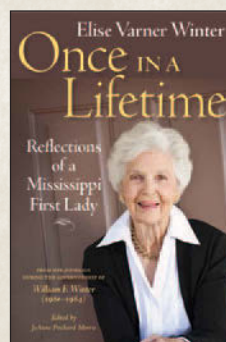
In addition to the wide scope that the volume's music and photographs add to the body of documentary work on Ledbetter, Santelli's and Place's written pieces also further a broad understanding of the musician's life and his impact on American culture. In his introduction, "Lead Belly: A Man of Contradiction and Complexity," Santelli describes his personal connection to Ledbetter, beginning with his fascination with the man as a musical master, as a foundation of rock 'n' roll, and as an authority on American folk music who also delivered authenticity in his performances. He notes Ledbetter's

musical versatility and ease of inhabiting multiple identities through his performance for particular audiences. And he recounts the personal experiences that made Ledbetter not only an authentic representation of the music he played, but also a professional song collector with the agency to move reflectively and independently in a peripatetic lifestyle. Santelli also conveys the sense that Ledbetter and his recordings are fundamental threads to a fabric of American cultural life, with his many relationships to culturally significant institutions and individuals. Quoting Pete Seeger, Santelli recounts, "He bequeathed to us a couple hundred of the best songs any of us will ever know," and concludes with the consideration that the continuing relevance of Ledbetter lies in his music's power to inspire generations of folk singers now and in the future through its potential to encourage a sense of common humanity within listeners.

Place's written contribution, "The Life and Legacy of Lead Belly," considers Ledbetter's professional career and personal relationships as a determinant of identity, a perspective that represents a significant move away from traditional folklorists' more archaic models for portraying identity through a constructed image of authenticity. Place goes further in his examination of Ledbetter's continuing significance, stating in his opening paragraph, "Ironically, Lead Belly is often spoken of as the 'discovery' of folklorists, but in many ways he was a walking and singing collector of American folk songs in his own right." Place describes Ledbetter as a professional "songster," a versatile musician who could reflect on his own life and simultaneously comment on American cultural life while adapting his performance for any audience. Place's piece studies the evolution of narratives about Ledbetter in media and scholarly representations alongside details of his personal life and career. Place combines biography with first-person accounts of Ledbetter from friends and family members, which again contributes to this volume's credibility and to the understanding of Ledbetter from a holistic perspective gathered from a wide range of voices and sources.

In the end, the strength of Place's essay and of this entire volume is its success in bringing together the voices and contributions of a diverse cross-section of people who have been personally affected by Ledbetter. Family, friends, scholars, and stakeholders in Ledbetter's legacy appear to have come together to create this civic and institutional cross-pollination of ideas and knowledge. Many opinions and voices are represented and respected in this collection, and they reflect the vision of human rights and personal independence that Ledbetter carried throughout his life. Smithsonian Folkways has succeeded in opening up a much-needed 21st-century discussion of Ledbetter, carrying his legacy into the future while helping to reconcile older, fragmented narratives.

Irene Van Riper



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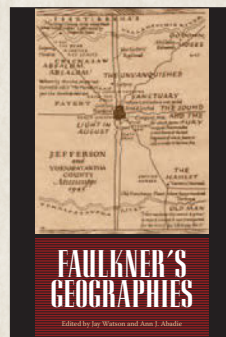
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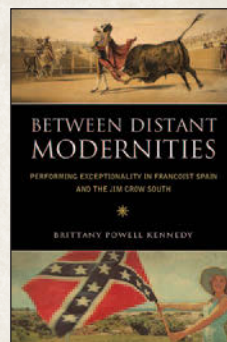
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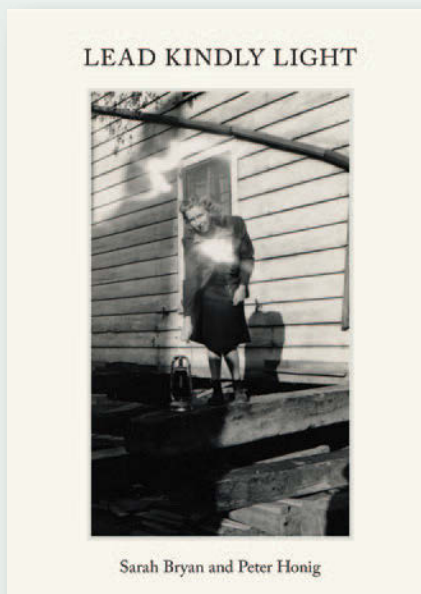
## *Lead Kindly Light: Pre-war Music and Photographs from the American South*

Various artists. Edited by Sarah Bryan and Peter Honig. Atlanta: Dust-to-Digital, 2014. 176 pages, 159 photographs. \$35.00, 2 CDs.

Husband-and-wife team Peter Honig and Sarah Bryan are collectors—he of pre-World War II 78 rpm records, she of long-forgotten, anonymous photo albums, mostly from Virginia and the Carolinas of the same era. (She also edits the *Old-Time Herald*, a magazine devoted to old-time Appalachian string music.) Atlanta-based Dust-to-Digital, the highly respected reissuer of traditional American folk music, has combined the couple's passions into *Lead Kindly Light*, an attractive package that includes a pair of CDs containing some of Honig's favorite music and a hardcover book with 159 pictures that Bryan selected from her collection of photo albums.

It makes for a happy blend. The music, restored to listenability by arcane (to me) digital wizardry, is a treat to hear. I am no expert, and not even an ardent fan, when it comes to traditional music, but the CDs' sound quality is crisper, cleaner, clearer than other reissues I've encountered (the 1952 Harry Smith *Anthology of American Folk Music*, released on CD in 1997 by Smithsonian Folkways Recordings comes to mind). Honig's choice of music makes for good listening. With a wide variety of dance tunes, love songs, and gospel numbers by the likes of the Roane County Ramblers, the Georgia Yellow Hammers, and Ernest Phipps and his Holiness Quartet, the music virtually demands that you tap (or stomp) your feet, and it challenges your imagination to picture the world(s) it came from.

And the photographs in the accompanying hardbound book help



considerably with that. Although the pictures are all anonymous, made by people who are now surely dead, and no doubt forgotten by those few survivors whose childhood likenesses are in the albums, Sarah Bryan has resurrected the images and brought them back to light so we might know a little more about the people who listened to Peter Honig's favorite music when it was new. The pictures are an odd and varied selection. Ownership is certainly a recurring theme: automobiles, firearms, farm animals, pets, children are all displayed proudly for the camera. One young man, wearing striped overalls, a plaid shirt, and a derby hat, sits cross-legged on the ground with a small dog and large shotgun in his lap staring into the camera with an air of vague menace. Various forms of employment are also a common topic. We see neatly dressed shopkeepers, agricultural laborers, and groups of men in industrial settings. Sobering social realities are occasionally evident. In one picture, a prissily dressed white child sits in a small wagon being pulled by tired-looking African American man. There are surprises as well. One image shows two women engaged in a passionate kiss. On the facing page are two young men seated cross-legged on the ground and holding hands.

Mostly, though, the photographs

seem to be about moments in people's lives: what must have been important moments for those involved, moments of no apparent importance, moments of sheer goofiness, and moments that barely seem to be moments at all. In one picture, a teenage boy in knickers stands against a brick wall proudly holding a stack of books (a summer reading list conquered, perhaps). In another, three women sit outdoors and stare at the sky holding sheets of film to their eyes, apparently looking at a solar eclipse. The photo has been crudely trimmed and pasted to a black background, giving it the appearance of being on an early television screen. In a strange, inexplicable image, a man is on all fours in a farmyard, a goose on his back. A crouching woman seems to be talking to the goose. In yet another, a well-dressed family of four—mom, dad, and two girls—sit in camp chairs in a neatly kept backyard. They are gathered around a white duck seated in a child's rocking chair, and they gaze fondly at him.

*Lead Kindly Light* (also the title of a hymn on Disc 1) is a delightful piece of work. The music is fine and great fun. The photographs are less straightforward, a bit more mysterious. Sarah Bryan sums up the connection between the two quite nicely in her preface to the book: "By the transitory act of making music into sound-gathering devices and standing in front of light-gathering devices, [the musicians and the people photographed] created objects that would survive them, and allow them now to be recollected." Bryan and Honig's "recollection" of these objects has the happy consequence of allowing us to sense some flavors of our past, a past that's not quite dead (Faulkner) but will never return again.

David Wharton

listening and responding to the interests of students, and through examples, skills, specific information, criticism, and encouragement, it can serve communities inside and outside the university in ways faculty members may never realize.

This spring we say goodbye to two colleagues who deserve awards. Southern Studies and sociology faculty member Barbara Combs heads to a new position at Clarke University in Atlanta after four years teaching Southern Studies and sociology. Barb taught inspired and inspiring classes on race, space, and place, Southern Studies methods, and other topics, and we'll miss her. Mary Hartwell Howorth leaves Barnard Observatory after 20-something years. Her job is impossible to describe, but she's been great at it.

Ted Ownby

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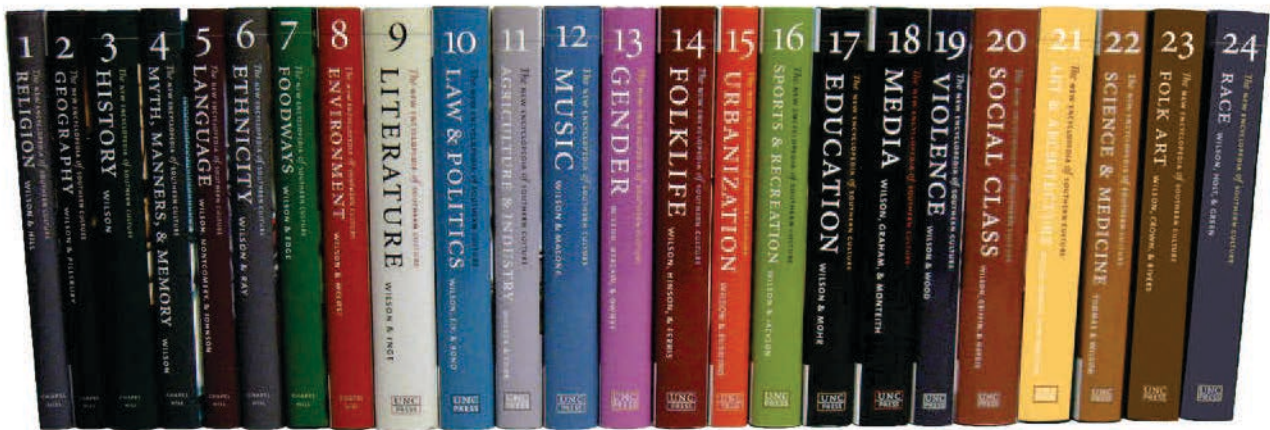
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