

# THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, U.S.A.

WINTER 2024



## DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



The fall semester is ending as I write this, and the spring semester is beginning as you read it. I enjoy a reprieve from the madcap scramble of fall as much as anyone, but the truth is, I'm always ready to pick up the pace again in January. As the Center's director, I go to a lot of meetings, and a lot of meetings come to me—in the form of students dropping in, colleagues stopping by, the occasional phone call, the more frequent and frankly relentless matter of email. That sounds like the set-up for a complaint, but in fact I mean just the opposite: a column in celebration of meetings! (Well, not all of them.) But conversation is the way ideas move, and they are the primary vehicle for much of the collaboration we engage in with other units on campus and with communities beyond it. What follows is a glimpse into my meeting calendar for the last week of the 2023 fall term. To keep the list manageable, to showcase the spice of daily Center life, and, okay, to keep from complaining, I've picked just a few.

Monday: Met with Vice-Chancellor for Diversity and Community Engagement, Dr. Shawnboda Mead, and Black Power at Ole Miss Faculty Fellow, Professor Ralph Eubanks, to discuss progress on the Freedom Trail marker (it's approved!) that will soon grace Fulton Chapel, the site of a peaceful protest by Black UM students in 1970, resulting in the arrest of eighty-nine and the expulsion of eight. We also covered plans for an event in February exploring the legacy of the twenty-seven demands originally made by those students; the status and number of oral histories Professor Eubanks and graduate assistant Amirhea Bishop have collected to date; and the enrollment in Professor Eubanks's spring class, SST 109, "Rights and Southern Activism." (It's full.)

Tuesday: Met with Afton Thomas, the Center's associate director for programs, to discuss the spring SouthTalks schedule, which continues our theme of "Creativity in the South" (keep reading to learn more about the exciting line-up) and to talk about the Center's forthcoming annual report. Met with a prospective undergraduate student from Memphis and was impressed by her ability to articulate

how she saw an interdisciplinary degree augmenting her eventual plan to go to law school.

Because she is from a state that participates in the Academic Common Market, she will be eligible for a reduced tuition rate at UM. Southern Studies is now a "special program," meaning that we have our own application process layered in with general admissions. We accept seventy students a year. Later, a graduate student stopped in to discuss organizing her field notes from her internship this past summer. Students on the internship track write a final paper and defend it, as do thesis students.

Wednesday: Met with Jeff Jackson, the chair of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, and professors Simone Delorme (Southern Studies and anthropology) and JT Thomas (sociology) about future collaborations between the Center and the Coalition for the Study of Race and Racism (CSRR), a faculty-centered research initiative. For the past two years, the CSRR has held a spring event called the Forum on Race and Ethnicity. Last year, every panel included a least one Southern Studies faculty member or graduate student.

Thursday: Met with Jimmy Thomas, the Center's associate director for publications, to discuss plans for the 2024 Oxford Conference for the Book (OCB). This year will be the thirtieth OCB, an achievement recognized by a gift from the Hawthornden Foundation. In addition to continuing our partnerships with the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing and the National Book Foundation, we will also join forces this spring with the Southern Literary Festival.

Friday: One of the best days of the year: the Fall Documentary Showcase. The building buzzed all week in preparation: Kell Kellum, our operations assistant, printed photographs for the exhibition in the Gammill Gallery; Andy Harper, the director of the Southern Documentary Project, compiled film trailers; and students stretched out the deadline to submit both. My meetings really are boring by comparison. There is no better way to end the semester than by being reminded of how it all began: with the anticipation and energy of new and returning students.

And that's not even the half of it! I haven't mentioned conversations about the hiring of a new oral historian to work with the Southern Foodways Alliance; about several grants we hope to submit in the new year; or about the hiring committees for our professors of practice in Documentary Expression and our joint appointments with history and sociology. Have you got a good idea for something the Center could be doing? Do you know someone we should know—a prospective student or a future collaborator? Give me a call or send me an email. We'll set up a meeting.

Katie McKee

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On the cover: Artwork by Anne Scott Barrett

#### REGISTER STAFF

Editor: James G. Thomas, Jr.  
Graphic Designer: Susan Bauer Lee  
Editorial Assistant: Margaret Gaffney



# Living Blues News

Cover artist Diunna Greenleaf grew up immersed in gospel music. Her father was a member of the Spiritual Gospel Singers of Houston and a well-respected vocal teacher. It wasn't until after college and military service that she was encouraged to sing the blues. Over the last twenty-five years she has emerged as one of the most dynamic vocalists in the blues today.

After more than ten years of research, Gene Tomko has solved the mystery of Louisiana bluesman Left Hand Charlie. In the late 1950s Charlie Morris recorded some scorching sides for Excello and Goldband and then seemingly faded away. In this issue's edition of "Lost Blues Files," we uncover the story of this mystery bluesman. It is a fascinating piece of dogged research that includes some never-before-seen photos of Morris. We also present a first for *LB*—a YouTube channel of Left Hand Charlie's obscure sides so you can hear what he sounds like.

Bukka White possessed one of the most powerful voices to ever sing the blues, and he attacked his guitar with the same vigor. In this issue's "Let It Roll," we explore his March 7–8, 1940, recording session in Chicago for Vocalion/OKeh Records. The session, waxed just weeks after White was released from Parchman prison on a murder charge, is regarded as one of the last great prewar country blues sessions. It produced songs like "Aberdeen Mississippi Blues," "Parchman Prison Farm," "Fixin' to Die Blues," and "Special Stream Line."

We've also got features on Danva Johnson (James "Super Chikan" Johnson's son), Bay Area guitarist Pat Wilder, California's Ike Cosse, and writer-producer-drummer Tom Hambridge.

It is with great sadness that I announce the retirement of



longtime *LB* writer Jim DeKoster. Jim has been with *LB* since issue #2—that is fifty-three years. Aside from a few articles and his twenty-year run of the "Dozens" column, he wrote reviews the entire time. Easily the writer who has written the most reviews for us, his writing is part of the core voice of *LB*. His reviews were amazingly educational while never being preachy. Whenever I have a new writer join the staff I say, "Go read Jim DeKoster. He says more in fewer words than anyone." After reading his reviews for nearly forty years, I still learn something from him with every

issue. Jim's depth of blues knowledge is remarkable. He has been a rock-solid writer and a good friend and mentor to me. I'll miss him and, more importantly, *Living Blues* will miss him, along with anyone who wants to learn about the blues.

In closing, over the last couple of years, our expenses to bring you the magazine have skyrocketed. Printing, shipping, and postage costs have all gone through the roof. If you love *Living Blues* and would like to help us continue to do what we do, please consider making a donation to the Friends of *Living Blues*. You can visit [umfoundation.givingfuel.com/cssc](http://umfoundation.givingfuel.com/cssc) for further details on giving.

Brett J. Bonner



# southtalks

— SERIES —

## CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

**TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, AT 4:00 P.M.**

**Barnard Observatory**

**“The Creative Legacy of  
the Unusual Artist  
Ms. L. V. Hull”**

**Yaphet Smith and  
Annalise Flynn**



Stories infuse our lives with meaning, but whose stories get told? From whose point of view? For what purpose? Join filmmaker Yaphet Smith and independent arts administrator Annalise Flynn as they discuss the role of storytelling, particularly the need for new narratives, in the various efforts to share L. V. Hull’s artful life. These efforts include a documentary film, preserving her home, which was listed as one of America’s 11 Most Endangered Places by the National Trust in 2023, and repurposing structures on Ms. Hull’s street in Kosciusko, Mississippi, to create the L. V. Hull Legacy Center, which will open in November 2024 in conjunction with an exhibit of her work at the Mississippi Museum of Art.

Yaphet Smith is a screenwriter, lawyer, and documentary filmmaker based in Austin, Texas. He is dedicated to enriching life through story, with an emphasis on stories that reflect Black people’s full humanity. Annalise Flynn is an independent curator and arts administrator based in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. She holds a bachelor’s degree from Northwestern University and a master’s degree from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, AT NOON**

**Barnard Observatory**

***The Tacky South***

**Katharine A. Burnett and Monica Carol Miller**

As a way to comment on a person’s style or taste, the word “tacky” has distinctly southern origins. Its roots trace to the so-called “tackies” who tacked horses on South Carolina farms before the Civil War. Coeditors of *The Tacky South*, Katie Burnett and Monica Miller, will discuss tackiness and its various permutations, as well as the term’s connections to the US South. They will highlight the essays

**Spring 2024**

*SouthTalks is a series of events (including lectures, performances, film screenings, and panel discussions) that explores the interdisciplinary nature of Southern Studies. This series is free and open to the public, and typically takes place in the Tupelo Room of Barnard Observatory unless otherwise noted. Visit the Center’s website for up-to-date information about all Center events.*

During the 2023–24 academic year, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture turns to “Creativity in the South” as our programming focus. The US South is a region of profound contrast. Extreme poverty exists uneasily alongside extreme wealth. Political and social conservatism digs into the same place that rooted the civil rights movement. Chronically underfunded school districts populate the very landscape that nurtures internationally renowned writers and artists and painters. This semester we explore creativity in the South by asking how place shapes—and sometimes even requires—the creative expression linked to it. We define *creativity* broadly to include the processes of making and remaking “the South” over time and through different mediums.

If you require special assistance relating to a disability, please contact Afton Thomas at amthoma4@olemiss.edu or call 662-915-5993.

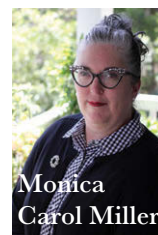
featured in their collection, which range from discussions of nineteenth-century local-color fiction and the television series *Murder, She Wrote* to red velvet cake and the ubiquitous influence of Dolly Parton.



**Katharine A.  
Burnett**

Katharine A. Burnett is an associate professor of English at Fisk University in Nashville and the author of *Cavaliers and Economists: Global Capitalism and the Development of Southern Literature, 1820–1860*.

Monica Carol Miller is an associate professor of English at Middle Georgia College in Macon, Georgia. She is the author of *Being Ugly: Southern Women Writers and Social Rebellion*.



**Monica  
Carol Miller**

**THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 22, AT 5:00 P.M.**

**Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory**

***The Warehouses***

**Ivette Spradlin**

Ivette Spradlin’s photography project, titled *The Warehouses* and based on her *Wild Wild West End Oral History*, will exhibit in the Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory from January 17 to February 23. A walk-through exhibition talk with Spradlin will take place on February 22. See pages 10 and 11 in this issue of the *Southern Register* for more information on Spradlin and her project.



**SATURDAY, MARCH 2, AT 4:00 P.M.**  
**Barnard Observatory**

### ***Our Turn***

**Daniela Griffin, Princeton James,  
and Zaire Love**

*Our Turn* is more than an exhibition; it is a powerful declaration of reclamation. Daniela Griffin, Princeton James, and Zaire Love, three Black southern artists, are returning to the campus where they once walked as students all set to make their mark with unapologetic creativity. The exhibition promises to be a captivating and immersive experience. Together, these three multi-disciplinary artists reclaim their space in art creation and showcase their talent and creativity powered by the gift of Blackness nurtured in the South.

Daniela Griffin is a sociological philanthropist, a model, and an actress. She holds a BA in sociology from the University of Florida and an MA in sociology from the University of Mississippi. She is the director of the North Mississippi Get2College center in Southaven, Mississippi. Princeton Echols is a playwright, producer, director, actor, and vocalist who wrote, directed, and produced the play *The Royal Family*. Zaire Love is a music maker, writer, educator, and the Pihakis Documentary Filmmaker for the Southern Foodways Alliance.



**Daniela Griffin**



**Princeton James**



**Zaire Love**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, AT NOON**

### **Virtual Event**

**“Amplifying ‘Anotherness’:  
Disrupting Dominant Narratives  
about Appalachia”**

**Neema Avashia**



**Neema Avashia**

Both Appalachia and the South are frequently represented as monoliths in mainstream media representations of place and people. But for the folks who live in these regions, we know that they are far from monolithic. That they are home to immigrants, to queer people, to Hindus and Buddhists and Muslims and Jews, to people who are politically radical, to every identity not included in a dominant narrative that casts our homes as white, Christian, straight, and conservative. This dominant narrative has been used to vilify Appalachian people, to dehumanize them, and ultimately, to extract the resources from the regions without any accountability for that extraction. In this SouthTalk, Neema Avashia explores what happens when we challenge that dominant narrative, when we write and publish and amplify narratives that complicate understanding of place and people.

Neema Avashia is the daughter of Indian immigrants and was born and raised in southern West Virginia. She has been an educator and activist in the Boston Public Schools since 2003 and was named a City of Boston Educator of the Year in 2013. Her first book was *Another Appalachia: Coming Up Queer and Indian in a Mountain Place*.

Registration details for this virtual event can be found on the Center’s website.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27, AT NOON**

**Barnard Observatory**

**“Ain’t I Pretty?”: Sweet Daddy Grace  
and the Sacred Blues of the Badman”**

**Xavier Sivels**



**Xavier Sivels**

From the summer of 1926 until his death in 1959, Charles Manuel Grace made a name for himself as the faith-healing leader of the United House of Prayer for All People (UHOP). Establishing widespread support for his ministry in working-class communities in the American Southeast, he organized the UHOP as an alternative to mainstream churches by blending charismatic religion and secular culture. Grace adapted the “badman” archetype of the blues to inform his ministry, upend traditional notions of Black masculinity, and blur distinctions between the sacred and the profane. The result was a multi-million-dollar religious empire centered around his embodiment of the badman in the pulpit as “Sweet Daddy” Grace.

Xavier Sivels is a doctoral candidate in history at Mississippi State University. His research looks at the intersections of African American history, popular music, and gender/sexuality. His dissertation “Freakish Man: Sexual Blues, Sacred Beliefs, and the Transformation of Black Queer Identity, 1870–1957,” uses Black popular music and religion to trace how Black working-class culture changed from accepting, and even celebrating, queer sexuality in the public sphere to insisting that it remain closeted. Sivels was the 2023 *Study the South* Research Fellow.

**TUESDAY, APRIL 9, AT 5:00 P.M.**

**Overby Center Auditorium**

***After Sherman***

**Jon-Sesrie Goff**



**Jon-Sesrie  
Goff**

Returning to the coastal South Carolina land that his family purchased after Emancipation, filmmaker Jon-Sesrie Goff desired to explore his Gullah/Geechee roots, a journey that transformed into a poetic investigation of Black inheritance, trauma, and generational wisdom amid the violent tensions that define America’s collective history.

Jon-Sesrie Goff is a multidisciplinary artist, curator, and arts administrator. His work includes extensive research, visual documentation, and oral history interviews in the

coastal American South on the legacy of Black landowner-ship and Gullah/Geechee heritage preservation.

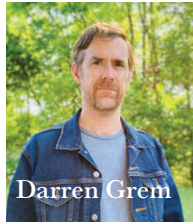
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## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10, AT NOON

### Barnard Observatory

#### “Good Night, New Deal: *The Waltons* and the South’s Great Depression in American Memory”

Darren E. Grem



*The Waltons*, a popular television show airing from 1972 to 1981, re-remembered and re-framed for millions what the Great Depression and New Deal meant, using Virginia writer Earl Hamner Jr.’s personal remembrances and novels to present southern whites as exemplars of family ties, communal bonds, and self-reliant work. Tapping into a growing conservative outlook in American life and politics, *The Waltons* joined—and conflicted with—other southern memory myths that erased or enhanced the New Deal and federal state’s role in the Depression-era and modern South. This talk will consider what *The Waltons*’s regional, racial, and rural story-lines offered Americans reeling during the recessionary 1970s. More broadly, it will use *The Waltons* as a springboard for considering the memories and myths we allow to be aired when capitalism falters or fails, whether derived from the distant hard times of the 1930s or 1970s or the recent hard times of the Great Recession and Covid-crash.

Darren E. Grem is an associate professor of history and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. He is the author of *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity*, and his next book, *Hard Times, USA: The Great Depression and New Deal in American Memory*, explores how Americans after World War II remembered and used the Great Depression via popular culture and in political activism for and against the New Deal state.

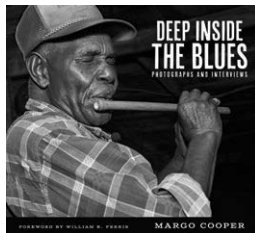
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## TUESDAY, APRIL 16, AT 5:00 P.M.

### Barnard Observatory

#### *Deep Inside the Blues*

Margo Cooper, Joe Ayers,  
and Trent Ayers



In this SouthTalk, photographer and author Margo Cooper will be joined in conversation by blues musicians Joe Ayers and his son Trent Ayers. Cooper had the privilege of interviewing both Ayers men for her book *Deep Inside the Blues*. She describes Joe Ayers as kind, wise, and passionate about playing guitar, and Trent Ayers grew up listening to a variety of blues music with his father—tapes of Arthur “Big Boy” Crudup, Muddy Waters, R. L. Burnside, and Junior Kimbrough. Trent and his

father recently worked on an album together called *A Father Son Legacy*. Joe and Trent Ayers will play music during this SouthTalk.

Margo Cooper’s recently published book, *Deep Inside the Blues*, collects thirty-four of her interviews with blues artists and is illustrated with more than 160 of her photographs. Many of the key blues players of the period have already passed, making their stories and Cooper’s photographs of them all the more poignant and valuable.

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## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, AT

### NOON

### Barnard Observatory

#### “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism”

Joseph M. Thompson



Country music maintains a unique, decades-long relationship to the US military, but these ties didn’t just happen. Joseph M. Thompson explores how country music’s Nashville-based business leaders on Music Row created partnerships with the Pentagon to sell their audiences on military service while selling country music to US servicemembers and international audiences. Beginning in the 1950s, the military flooded armed forces airwaves with the music, hosted tour dates at bases around the world, and drew on country music artists to support recruitment programs. Over the last half of the twentieth century, the close connections between the Defense Department and Music Row gave an economic boost to the white-dominated sounds of country while fueling divisions over the meaning of patriotism.

Joseph M. Thompson is assistant professor of history at Mississippi State University. His first book, *Cold War Country: How Nashville’s Music Row and the Pentagon Created the Sound of American Patriotism*, analyzes the economic and symbolic connections between the country music business and the military-industrial complex since World War II.

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## FRIDAY, MAY 3, AT 6:00 P.M.

### Gammill Gallery and Tupelo Room

### Barnard Observatory

#### Spring Documentary Showcase

The Spring Documentary Showcase is a celebration of the work by our documentary students. Each artist will present their work. Attendees will have an opportunity to engage with the artists and their work during a reception.

*Check the Center’s website at [southernstudies.olemiss.edu](http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu) for additions to the SouthTalks schedule.*



# University of Mississippi Celebrates 175 Years

## *Center Director Reflects on the University's Past While Looking to the Future*

*On November 6 the University of Mississippi marked the 175th anniversary of its founding. Center Director Katie McKee gave the keynote address from the steps of the Lyceum. Not surprisingly, Southern Studies and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture are central to her remarks, printed here.*

Chancellor Boyce, Provost Wilkin, and members of the University's leadership team, thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's activities. I am honored to be included in these events. When Provost Wilkin asked me to speak today, I thanked him, declined, and suggested several other people whom I thought were better suited to the task. You are witness to the extent of my influence.

It might work better, I said, if I were in one of the roles to which people more often look on such occasions: a historian, perhaps (I would rely on facts) or a poet (I would rely on your not being sure exactly what I had said but admiring it nonetheless). Instead, I am a professor of nineteenth-century American literature and the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. What follows is a meditation on this place—the University of Mississippi—where I have done the bulk of my career, raised my children, grown to middle age.

Depending on which source you consult, the name for a 175th anniversary is a ter/quas/qui/centennial—confusing in its actual reference to three and nearly impossible to say



Katie McKee delivers her speech from the steps of the Lyceum.

or to remember—or a septa/quinta/quin/que/centennial, which is worse. Hallmark doesn't cover this territory, and it isn't really very old anyway, except by American standards. I once saw a building in Europe that said "renovated, 1492." When the nation turned 175 in 1951, President Harry S. Truman made a stirring speech about the United Nations and its centrality to the future of the free world; when the Smithsonian turned 175 in 2021, it premiered a new exhibit called simply *FUTURES*.

People aren't entirely sure what to do with 175, the truth is; they feel called to look forward, in part to the rounder, more satisfying number of 200. I might not be here in 2048, though.

So while I, too, look to the University's future, I work every day amid reminders of the university's past. The Center for the Study of Southern Culture is home to three interdisciplinary programs, as well as *Living Blues* magazine, the Southern Documentary Project, the Southern Foodways Alliance, the SouthTalks lecture series,

# “What we do today sets the table for the inquiry twenty-five years from now, fifty from now. What will be the legacy of our

and the Oxford Conference for the Book. In fact, the Center itself will celebrate a fiftieth anniversary in 2027. Barnard Observatory is our home, one of the three antebellum structures remaining on our campus. Going to work is a bit like living in an old house; there are leaks, creaky floors, an occasional uninvited guest from the animal kingdom, maybe a few from the world beyond. Photography was in its infancy in the 1840s, and we have images of those early days—young men milling around in front of the Lyceum, and, after 1859, Barnard Observatory stark on an as-yet unadorned landscape. The place was for those young men—I wouldn't have been here, although women would first appear on campus in 1882.

“What is the function of the university?” is a question for which the answer varies, depending on the moment in which you ask it. In 1848, the University of Mississippi's goal was in part to stanch that era's variation on brain drain; it aimed to keep young minds out of a national orbit where the drumbeat of sectionalism already sounded and antislavery rhetoric was on the rise. Politics and education are not only recent bedfellows.

In my classes, we often talk about place as a palimpsest, that is, we compare it to a document on which words have been written and erased, written and erased, until multiple stories overlap, shaping each other. Our campus is like that: what has come before matters to what is here now, and today matters to what will follow us. The story of this place begins with

the Indigenous people who first lived here; north Mississippi is the ancestral home of the Chickasaw nation, and we inhabit it today as uninvited guests. Mississippi was a frontier in 1848—the old Southwest—and our university arose from the dreams and ambitions of white people sweeping into the region who brought with them enslaved Black people whose labor built and maintained this campus. The work of the UM Slavery Research Group means that we know some of their names: George, Henry, John, Squash, Moses, Will, Nathan, Simon, Isaac, Harrison, Luna, and the woman whose story is immortalized on the contextualization marker in front of Barnard Observatory: Jane.

The Barnard in Barnard Observatory is Frederick A. P. Barnard, third leader and first chancellor of the University of Mississippi, serving from 1856 to 1861. The building where I go to work every day both is and is not the place he imagined. Barnard was classically trained and taught subjects as various as literature and mathematics. He believed in the breadth that is bedrock to a liberal arts education; he believed in the cultivation of minds because he saw that as the pathway to responsible citizenship. But at heart, Barnard was a scientist, and his yearning was for the stars. He was invested in moving the University beyond an early-days role as a finishing school for the young men of the planter class and elevating it into a world-renowned institution for higher learning. He designed Barnard Observatory to be a cutting-edge scientific facility, modeled after an existing structure in Russia,

but bigger, better, complete with three towers, the central turret outfitted with a mechanism to turn what was to be the world's largest lens.

Barnard's timing was off, though. Between the building's completion in 1859 and the anticipated delivery of the lens, the Civil War turned Mississippi into the last place on earth to make safe delivery of an expensive piece of glass. Diverted to Illinois, that lens eventually ended up on the campus of Northwestern University, where it remains today. In the short term, Barnard Observatory functioned instead as a hospital, as did much of the campus. For many years, the building did house the Department of Physics and Astronomy and later the Navy ROTC; for a while it was a sorority house. When the state's governor was leading the charge to prevent James Meredith from integrating the campus, it was the Chancellor's home. It has never really been an observatory.

By at least one account, then, I live in a mausoleum of failed ambition, an Icarus that never even got off the ground, the originary snatching of defeat from the jaws of victory. But I don't think about it that way. What I see in Barnard Observatory is a resiliency of vision, the legacy of a calling to nurture in this state, and this region, and this nation a hunger for knowledge. Instead of plans turned aside, I see—if not actual stars (you have to go to Kennon Observatory for that)—a vision for Mississippi and for the South of the twenty-first century, deeply aware of its past, but even more deeply invested in its future.



# university as a space for intellectual years from now, one hundred years calling to educate the students of today?"

If you bet that I could make it through these few minutes without a reference to William Faulkner, you're going to lose. And you probably know where I'm headed. We often hear Faulkner quoted as saying: "The past is never dead. It's not even past." But Faulkner didn't say that; one of his characters, the lawyer Gavin Stevens, did in the 1951 novel *Requiem for a Nun*. Like people, Gavin got some things right and some things wrong, and just as we know that Shakespeare is not Lady Macbeth—we don't go around quipping "as Shakespeare said, 'out, damned spot'"—so Faulkner is not Gavin, even if Gavin is one of the characters to whom the author most frequently returns. Without question, Faulkner suggests in his work—as does Shakespeare, incidentally—that the past casts a long shadow into the present, and we ignore it at our peril. But that's not the same thing as *living* in the past, and it's certainly not an excuse for romanticizing it.

At the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, we do our work with an eye to the future, convinced of at least three things. First, the South is multiple and diverse, in terms of the people who live in it, the places they come from, and the beliefs they hold. In fact, we talk, not about a solid South, but about the microregions that add up to Souths—plural. Second, the South is not exceptional but representative of both our national strengths and our shortcomings, and when we ask ourselves questions about the American dream or about the American character, we could do worse than to study how those

ideals have played themselves out on southern soil. And third, the South is poised to lead the nation in sorting out some of its most pressing questions—about climate change, about structural racism, about uneven access to health care, to education, and to economic success. What's more, Mississippi and the University of Mississippi can lead the region in national problem-solving. Pouring out of a state routinely and consistently classified as last in something are poets and musicians and filmmakers and photographers and activists and politicians and teachers and scientists and engineers and mathematicians and doctors and painters and. . . . Mississippi can lead, as the flagship institution the University of Mississippi must lead, in part because we already know where conversations need to begin. We don't first need convincing that America's ills are here; someone has undoubtedly just pointed to Mississippi on the news as the last best example of them. All of those poets and doctors and artists can help us talk about poverty and racism and environmental degradation—and about joy and determination and commitment. Paradoxically, I suggest to you that it is perhaps sometimes good to be underestimated. You can get more done.

The provost would be the first to tell you that I have not always agreed with "the University." Several years ago, I was giving him the business about something "the University" had done that I thought was wrong, and he asked me who I meant when I said "the University." I had an answer, but our extended conversation—not to be fully replayed here—stuck with me and

has shaped my subsequent relationship with my place of employment. To be clear, I am not a UM alum; I reserve my misty-eyed reveries for my own alma mater. But over the years, I have come to care a great deal about where I work. To the students and parents with whom I interact, to the colleagues from other institutions, and to the broader publics we serve, I am the University of Mississippi. We all are. The future demands every day our greatest resourcefulness, our greatest ingenuity, the highest caliber of our creativity, but we owe the future that. Looking back on his time at the university, Chancellor Barnard said, "I have done some work here which will not die with me." What we do today sets the table for the university as a space for intellectual inquiry twenty-five years from now, fifty years from now, one hundred years from now, when even the sunniest twenty-year-old student walking the campus today will not be here and the program from this event will be at best part of a dusty archive. How will those people remember our university? What will come from the resiliency of our vision? What will be the legacy of our calling to educate the students of today, beset as they are by anxieties I never knew? We get to decide here in what will be the past for the people of 2048, of 2073, of 2098, who will stand in our places.

So happy birthday to the University of Mississippi. Here's to the future from the past in the present we're all making together.

Katie McKee

COURTESY IVETTE SPRADLIN



# THE WILD WILD WEST END

# Wild Wild West End

## Atlanta Artist Returns to Former Stomping Grounds

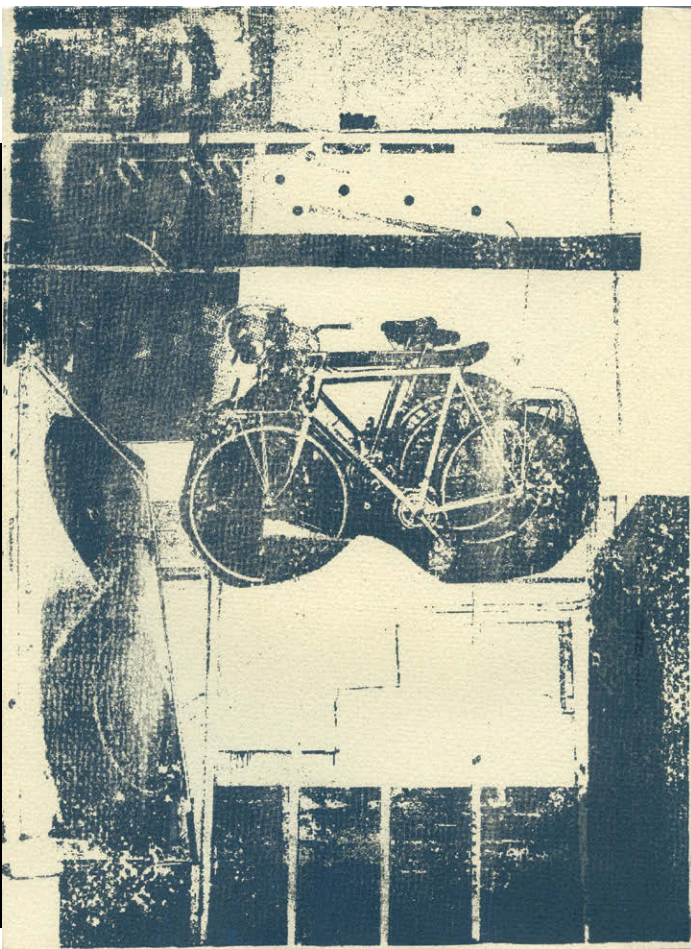
Ivette Spradlin is an award-winning, Cuban American artist whose work centers on the emotional aspects of transition, adaptation, and communal ties. She holds an MFA from Tyler School of Art at Temple University and a BFA from the University of Georgia. Since the 1990s she has photographed and recorded the stories of members of different subcultures and their environs, such as punks and skateboarders, Cuban exiles in the United States, female-identifying artists, elderly jazz musicians in Pittsburgh, people who have experienced a Bigfoot sighting, and her friends and neighbors during the 2020 lockdown. In 2015, Spradlin and

Ivette Spradlin

COURTESY IVETTE SPRADLIN







COURTESY IVETTE SPRADLIN

Lenore Thomas formed a collaborative team called BUFF. Although the two founders continue to live in different cities, BUFF has created four bodies of work, shown in several exhibitions and publications.

Spradlin has shown her work nationally and internationally, and has taught photography and art at colleges and universities in and around Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She recently returned to the Atlanta area where she is working on an oral history project and reconnecting with her former punk community.

This project, *Wild Wild West End Oral History*, was originally developed from the fall of 1999 to the spring of 2000. Tenants of four warehouses in the West End of Atlanta, Georgia—punks, artists, dreamers—agreed to be photographed. Each subject was also asked to give a quote to accompany their image. Their likeness, their musings, and the warehouse itself were then turned into a handmade book called *The Warehouses*. The book is coptic-bound and filled with screen-printed collages from photographs of their living environs and silver gelatin prints of the tenants. All text was letter pressed with handset type. Only one complete copy of the artist book was ever made.

The video of the oral histories offers a new perspective and accounting of this unique warehouse living experience. While the book documents Atlanta's DIY scene at the turn of the last century, the oral histories offer memories of a specific place and time in a subculture. If the book is the facts, the videos are the feeling. Former warehouse tenants tell stories about the freedom they felt and the friendships and bonds created there.

*The Wild Wild West End Oral History* is an ongoing project. There have been thirty interviews completed so far. The project will exhibit in the Gammill Gallery in Barnard Observatory from January 17 to February 23, and a walk-through talk with Spradlin will take place on February 22.



COURTESY IVETTE SPRADLIN



# Tell about Oxford

## *Students Exhibit Photos from Class on Photographing Place in US South*

*Students who enrolled in Brooke White's SST 540 class this past fall created a portfolio of photographs that focused on the relationship between local cultures and the physical world. They examined the idea of "place" and made photographs in and around Oxford.*

*Each photographer was asked to explore and discover their own visual language and to convey their impressions of the US South. The exhibition featured the work of six students and displayed the diversity of visual approaches.*



CHARLIE PAPPAS



CHARLIE PAPPAS

This body of work that I call *Here, There* focuses on the importance of liminal spaces in day-to-day cycles that carry us forward in the grand scheme of time. The photographs exist as markers on a map, leading through the intimacy I share with others and this space. The representation of Oxford through a specific scope speaks to the individuality of the experiences that are held in the South, dispelling the myth of a monolith while also speaking to the ability it holds to exist as a synecdoche for a more global experience.

Without the use of color, the contrast between light and darkness and the tonal homogeneity of the grayscale illuminate the emotion of the work and place it in a seemingly timeless moment. The images focus on symbolic moments in time; movement of the in-between, destruction and rebirth, isolation and coexistence. They represent the perpetual attempt made to navigate the paths laid before one in life and the disorientation that arises from those experiences as we push our way through.

Charlie Pappas





These photos, collectively titled *Exhale*, dive into natural spaces around Oxford, Mississippi, that have sparked inspiration and created a unique type of stillness for me, and I hope to translate that through my imagery to others. The landscapes I shot not only feel calm and tranquil as one experiences the magic of each location in person, but I hope that my photos can feel peaceful and slow the viewer down as well. I aim through my work to show a lesser-known side of Oxford that provides a pause amidst the buzz and that feels like an exhale. I want this project to inspire people to go exploring and to consider ways they can rediscover what this place has to offer. There is so much more to see in this area than what most people traditionally think of— there is true richness and depth to find . . . if only you go searching. Once you find this Oxford, you unlock a completely new side; you just must peel back the layers. After all, you don't have to go far to feel like you're a world away.

Sarah Caroline Crall



Mr. Brown is a local farmer based in Water Valley, Mississippi. He is a senior citizen who has been farming for forty-three years, following the footsteps of his parents. He grows mushrooms, green vegetables, fruits, and herbs on his farm, and he raises livestock, such as chickens and goats. He occasionally gets some help, but most of the work on the farm is done by himself, from operating machines and building structures to taking care of everything on the farm. He brings his products to the Oxford community market for sale. He believes



that community markets are a very good platform for local independent farmers to sell their products and connect with customers. This project aims to simply show his journey from farm to market and his love for farming despite many challenges. He is a kind and generous person who loves to share his story. You can see pictures of him working on the farm and selling his products in the market.

Ashish Shrestha



My project focuses on the rapid expansion and growth of Oxford, but more importantly North Lamar Blvd. Taking a walk on the street that I drive on every day, and passing all these stores and buildings that I've never really paid attention to, brought me to realize that there is a totally different side to Oxford right inside of the town that I never knew really existed. From the old vintage shops and run-down shopping malls to the newly constructed fancy apartment complexes and houses, Oxford is expanding and changing by the month. While developing this project, I thought, "What makes this place right here special to Oxford now, and what has it done for the town in previous years?" Catching the differences between new and old Oxford can really illustrate the changes Oxford is going through.

Will Ridenour



WILL RIDENOUR



WILL RIDENOUR

I love going into antique shops to view the unique knick-knacks and the interesting pieces of furniture, paintings, toys, and clothes that others have donated or made. In my favorite antique shop, by the old Sears here in Oxford, I came up with the idea to photograph inside of stores. I wanted to take photographs within the antique shops to showcase the unique pieces that people have displayed and to tell a story about Oxford.

Alyssa Jordan



ALYSSA JORDAN





Carolyn, 30. I enjoy putting in a bit of extra effort into my dressing. Some mornings, that's the only motivation I need to kickstart my day.



Hunter, 21. We accept the love that we think we deserve.

In a world where photographs often leave viewers with unanswered questions and a lack of context, my project sought to remedy this by capturing portraits of Oxford residents and pairing each image with a brief sentence or two that reveals the participants' message to the world. This approach infuses each picture with context and a more impactful message. My intention with each picture is to provide a more impactful and immersive experience for viewers and allow them to delve into the emotions, stories, and hidden narratives concealed within the frame.

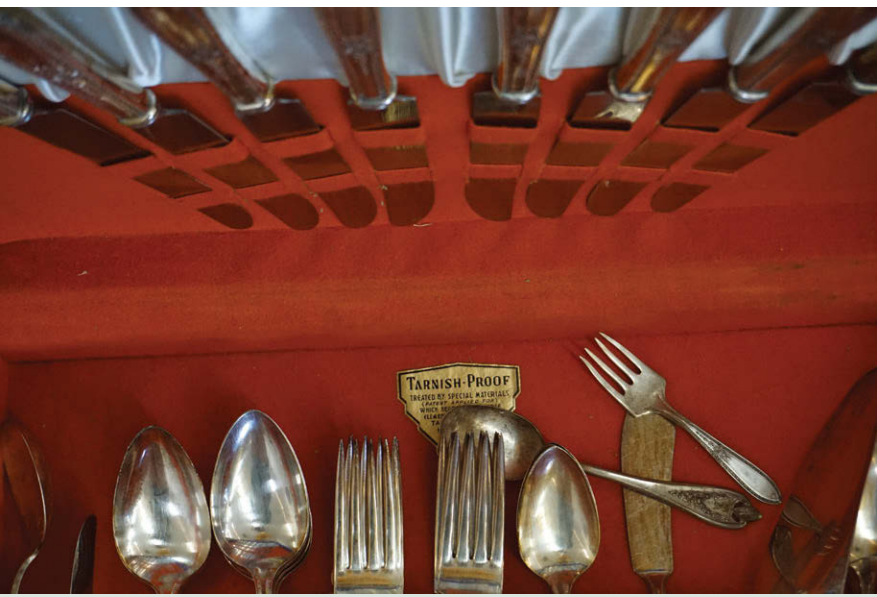
At the core of my work are themes of resilience, diversity, and human spirit. This project aims to dismantle the layers that separate us, acting as bridges between people. Through the lens, I strive to

nurture understanding, empathy, and connection, exposing the intricate web of emotions, struggles, and dreams that define the human experience.

In the field, my process involved an ongoing dialogue with the people I encountered on Oxford streets, approaching each subject with curiosity, seeking to understand their unique perspectives. The resulting images serve as windows into the lives of individuals from diverse backgrounds, capturing their unique and compelling stories.

The primary audience for my work is the community of Oxford—residents and anyone intrigued by the intricate web of human stories that compose Oxford's fabric. I aspire for my work to serve as a window into others' lives, fostering a deeper understanding of the shared human experience that unites us all.

Peter Muvunyi





# The Thirtieth Oxford Conference for the Book

## April 3–5, 2024

*Celebrating More Than Three Decades of Literary Oxford*

In 1993, Willie Morris, Barry Hannah, Kaye Gibbons, and many others convened for the first Oxford Conference for the Book to discuss “the dependence of literary arts upon practical concerns.” Just over three decades and an overwhelming number of “practical concerns” later, dedication to the craft persists in a local literary culture unafraid of pushing its boundaries.

On April 3–5, 2024, the Oxford Conference for the Book (OCB) celebrates its thirtieth convening on the very anniversary of its first iteration. Director Jimmy Thomas has followed in the footsteps of his predecessors to make the conference a signature of the arts community. Alongside the continued alliance between the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Square Books, this year’s conference benefits from a prestigious grant awarded by Hawthornden Foundation. In addition, the University of Mississippi will host this year’s Southern Literary Festival (SLF), which will coincide with the Oxford Conference for the Book. Since 1937, the SLF has gathered undergraduate writers from member schools across the Southeast for master classes with creative-writing faculty from across the region and to hear from writers who inspire them to keep the flame going. SLF events will mainly occur at the student union April 4–6 and include an open mic night for all interested writers and readers at the UM Depot on Thursday, April 4.

“We are delighted to celebrate the long history of the SLF and our participation in it, and thrilled to have the festival back on the UM campus,” says SLF co-director



Beth Spencer. “We’re particularly excited to partner with our friends at the Oxford Conference for the Book as they celebrate their thirtieth conference.”

The OCB and SLF will jointly welcome Andre Dubus III as the OCB/SLF keynote speaker, whose eight novels include *The House of Sand and Fog* (also a feature film) and *Such Kindness*, several short story collections, and the memoir *Townie*. His forthcoming book of essays, *Ghost Dogs*, arrives this spring. A Guggenheim Fellowship recipient and National Book Award finalist, Dubus sets the tone for two events focused on the act of writing and the art of literature.

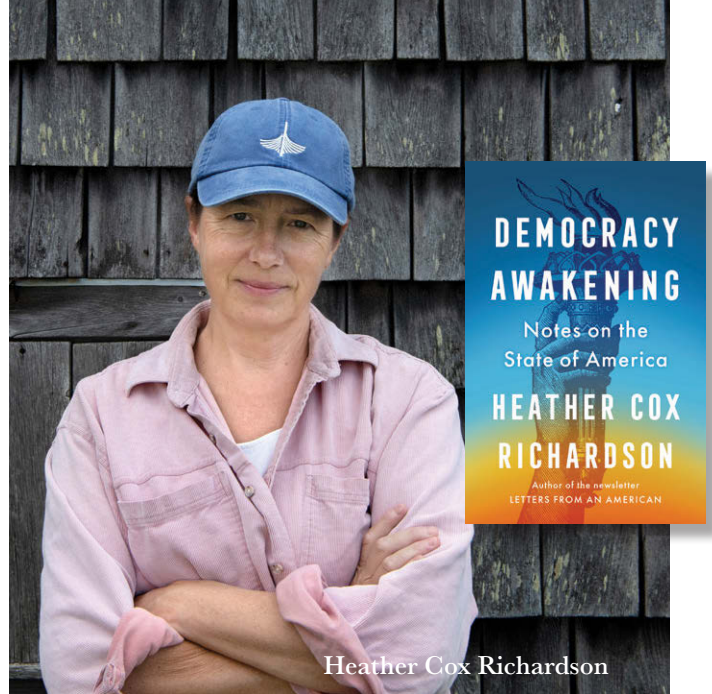
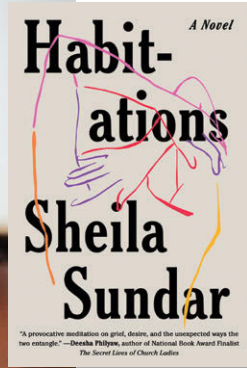
Tuesday, April 2, previews the conference with a “Prologue” reading from Sheila Sundar, whose book *Habitations* launches the same day. Wednesday, April 3, offers the annual Authors’ Welcome Party (tickets on sale now) at Memory House, the onetime home of William Faulkner’s brother and author John Faulkner, on the University campus.

All conference events on campus and on the Square are free and open to the public. Among the highlights on Thursday, April 4, and Friday, April 5, are Joseph McGill Jr. and Herb Frazier (*Sleeping with the Ancestors*), who promise timely reflection on McGill’s overnight stays in former slave dwellings ahead of Jodi Skipper’s “Behind the Big House” event Saturday in Holly Springs. The highly anticipated “National Book Foundation Presents” panel will place National Book Award honorees Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah (*Chain Gang All-Stars*) and José Olivarez

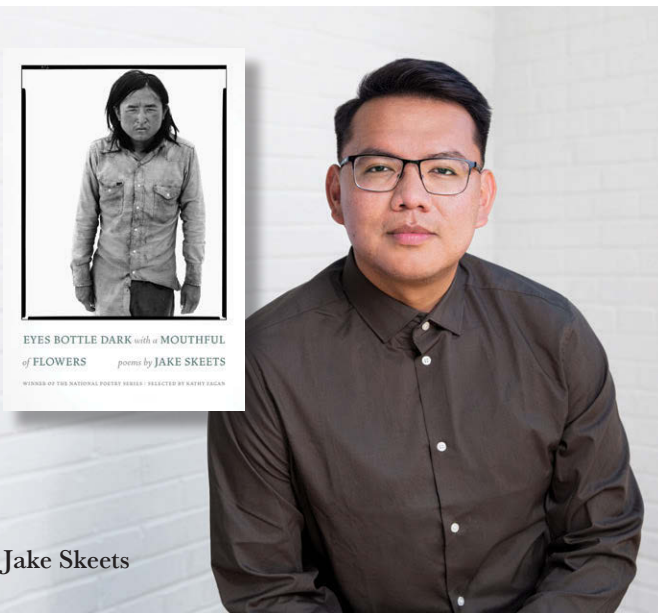
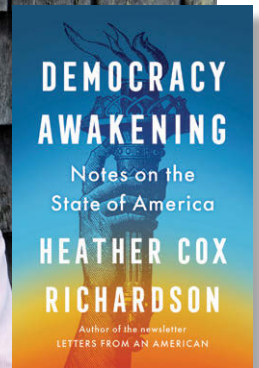




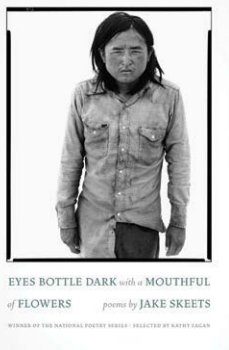
Sheila Sundar



Heather Cox Richardson



Jake Skeets



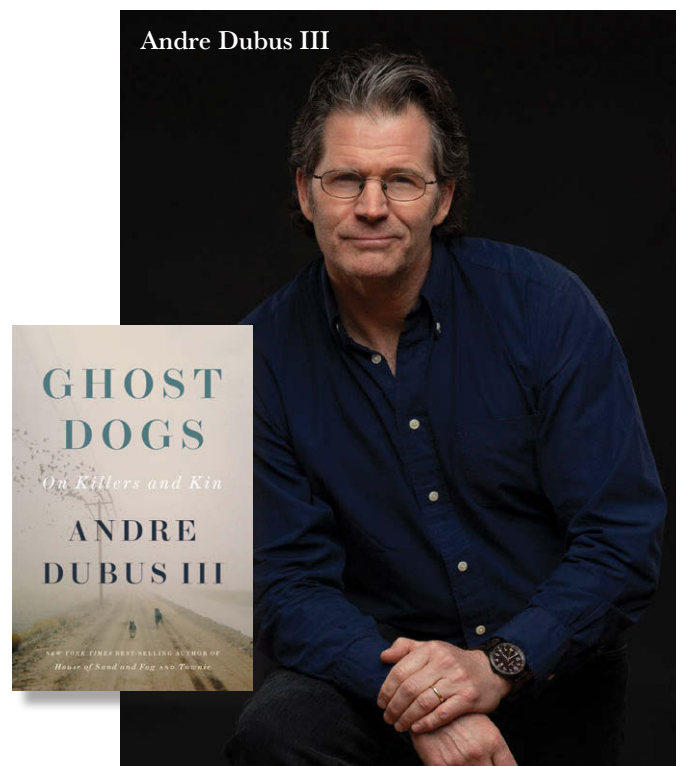
5, at Off Square Books. Past winners of the awards include Destiny Birdsong, Beverly Lowry, and De'Shawn Charles Winslow. Then enjoy live music, book signings, and libations at the Willie Morris Awards—hosted party to follow. “I can’t think of a more apt way to celebrate good writing and to honor the legacy of Willie Morris,” said Willie Morris Awards director Susan Nicholas.

Lastly, a “Postscript” Noir at the Bar returns to fulfill the expectations that last year’s storm left behind. On Friday night at Ajax Diner, we’ll close the conference with a live band and readings from local noir and crime writers.

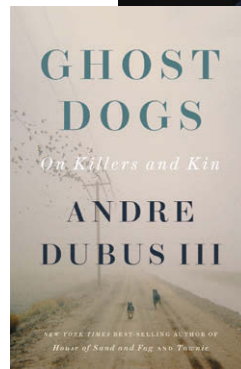
Each year, the Center collaborates with the Lafayette County Literacy Council, the Junior Auxiliary of Oxford,

(*Promises of Gold*) in a conversation with current John and Renée Grisham Writer in Residence Jake Skeets. Heather Cox Richardson (*Democracy Awakening*) marks another conference highlight as she discusses her *New York Times* Bestseller, *Democracy Awakening*. Poets will enjoy a session featuring Jake Skeets (*Eyes Bottle Dark with a Mouthful of Flowers*) and January Gill O’Neil (*Glitter Road*) before transitioning to Off Square Books to hear from Téa Obreht (*The Morningside*). Other panelists include Jen Fawkes (*Tales the Devil Told Me*), Jennifer Maritza McCauley (*When Trying to Return Home*) and Gabriel Bump (*The New Radicals*) in conversation with Michael X. Wang. The always-popular *Thacker Mountain Radio* will host another OCB episode with readings and live music at the Powerhouse. Additional authors and sessions will soon be announced on the OCB website ([www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com)).

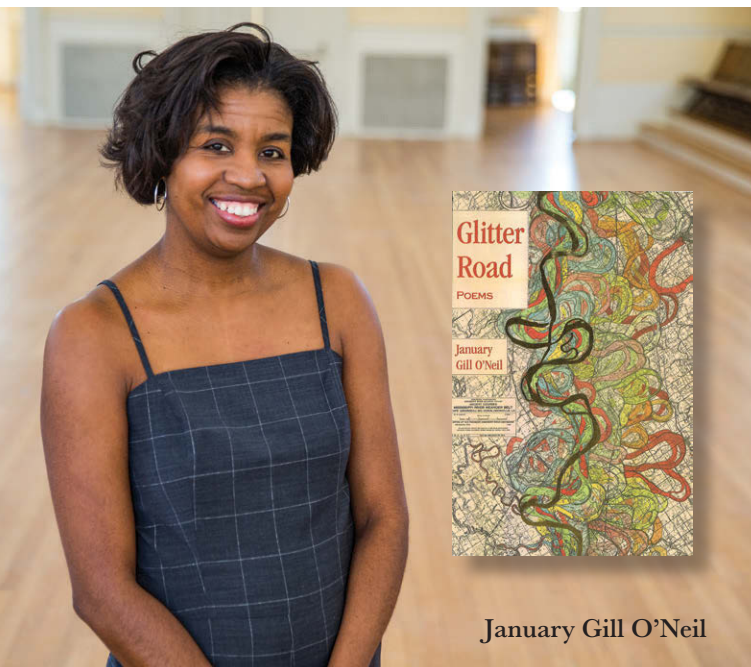
You won’t want to miss readings by the winners of the Willie Morris Awards for Southern Writing on Friday, April



Andre Dubus III







JOHN ANDREWS



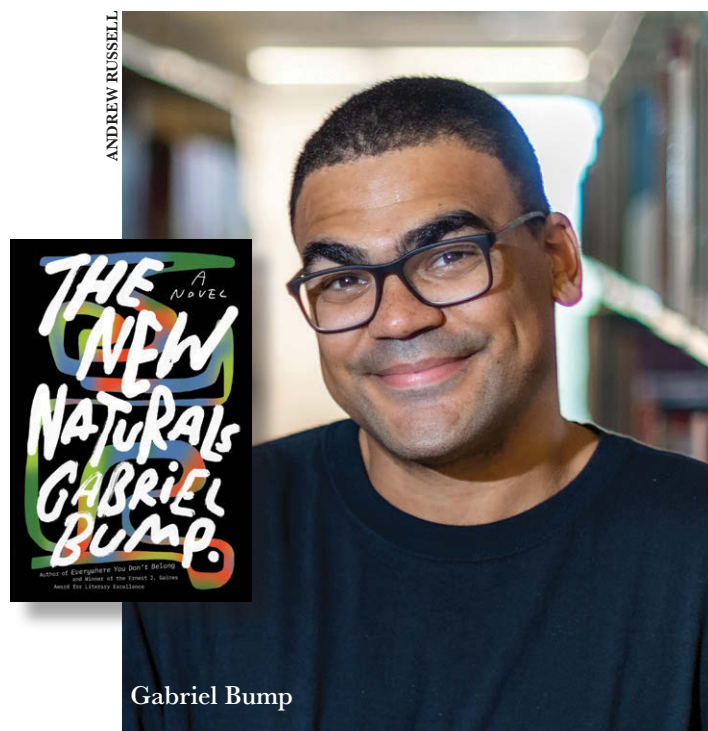
ILAN HAREL

the First Regional Library, and Square Books, Jr. to plan the Children's Book Festival, open to Lafayette County first- and fifth-graders. The two authors featured, including Ame Dyckman with her book *The New Kid Has Fleas*, will be available to sign books at Square Books, Jr. at 4:00 p.m. on Thursday, March 28. The Children's Book Festival is underwritten by the Elaine Hoffman Scott Memorial Fund.

Many thanks go out to our local, state, and national sponsors, including the Mississippi Humanities Council, the Mississippi Arts Commission, Hawthornden Foundation, the University of Mississippi, and the National Book Foundation. And special thanks go out to Oxford painter



ANDREW RUSSELL



Anne Scott Barrett, who created the poster artwork for this year's conference.

Check for updates at [oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://oxfordconferenceforthebook.com), where you can RSVP to the Authors' Party and Welcome Lunch. For more information on SLF workshops, visit [www.thesouthernliteraryfestival.org](http://www.thesouthernliteraryfestival.org) or contact Beth Spencer ([ecspence@olemiss.edu](mailto:ecspence@olemiss.edu)) or Angela Green ([akgreen2@olemiss.edu](mailto:akgreen2@olemiss.edu)). Watch [www.williemorrisawards.org](http://www.williemorrisawards.org), where this year's winners will be announced.

Contact Susan Nicholas ([nicholas@olemiss.edu](mailto:nicholas@olemiss.edu)) for information on how to nominate or submit a work for next year's contest. To find out how you can support the Oxford Conference for the Book, contact Jimmy Thomas ([jgthomas@olemiss.edu](mailto:jgthomas@olemiss.edu)) or [ocb@olemiss.edu](mailto:ocb@olemiss.edu).

Lucy Gaines





MERCEDES ZAPATA



ALEX M. PHILIP

# Years of Excellence Rewarded

## *Oxford Conference for the Book Recognized by Hawthornden Foundation*

In honor of its upcoming thirtieth conference, the Oxford Conference for the Book has received a surprise gift from Hawthornden Foundation. Jimmy Thomas, director of the Oxford Conference for the Book, welcomed the news. “We are both thrilled and incredibly grateful for this generous gift of \$35,000 in support of this year’s conference,” Thomas said. “This gift gives us the opportunity to imagine new and exciting ways of bringing the written word to the Oxford and University of Mississippi communities.”

Hawthornden Foundation is a private charitable organization that supports contemporary writers and the literary arts. Established by Drue Heinz, a noted philanthropist and patron of the arts, the foundation is named after Hawthornden Castle in Midlothian, Scotland. There, an international residential fellowship program provides month-long retreats for creative writers from all disciplines to work in peaceful surroundings.

“Hawthornden Foundation has begun to support organizations in the literary arts, including literary presses and journals, book festivals, literary centers, literary presenters, literary service organizations, public libraries, and organizations that support the development of youth as readers and writers,” said Ellyn Toscano, the foundation’s executive director. “Through our research and discussions with other leaders in the field of literary arts, the Oxford Conference for the Book came to our attention because of its thoughtful literary line-up and exemplary productions.”

Visit [www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com](http://www.oxfordconferenceforthebook.com) for more information. To learn about supporting Oxford Conference for the Book, contact Delia Childers, associate director of development, at [dgchilde@olemiss.edu](mailto:dgchilde@olemiss.edu).

OXFORD  
CONFERENCE  
*for the Book*



# Where the Past Meets the Present

*Greta Koshenina Combines Her Passions for Ancient Rome and the Modern South at the UM Museum*

Like most eighteen-year-olds, Greta Koshenina came to college unclear of what she wanted to do with her life. But through her studies in the College of Liberal Arts and at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, she discovered new interests and turned them into full-time employment.

Koshenina was raised in Water Valley, Mississippi, and attended high school at the Mississippi School of Math and Science. “I was really interested in going into the sciences because I thought that was the way to make a living and be in the world,” Koshenina said. “My dad is an engineer, and so I thought about architecture, or engineering, or physics.” While enrolled in a classics course, however, she went on a field trip to the University Museum and became fascinated with the Mediterranean antiquities and scientific instruments. She then decided to major in classics with a minor in mathematics and Italian. She even studied abroad in Italy and participated in an archeological dig in Tuscany. Koshenina began working at the UM Museum as an undergraduate intern and graduated with her BA in May of 2020 from the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

“I ended up working out a postgrad opportunity, which was a full digitization project on antiquities with

former university photographer Robert Jordan, and we spent a lot of time in a small room taking photos of thousands

of objects,” Koshenina said. “As I was doing that, I was thinking a lot about mythology, because I’ve always really



Greta Koshenina at work in the University of Mississippi Museum

MELANIE ANTONELLI



## “I’ve always really been interested in southern culture and its ties to Ancient Rome. That led me to the Southern Studies master’s program.”

been interested in southern culture and its ties to Ancient Rome. That led me to the Southern Studies master’s program because I knew I could do a graduate assistantship through the museum and do something I was familiar with and comfortable with, like collecting oral histories with family members of folk artists.”

After earning her MA in Southern Studies in 2023, the museum hired Koshenina as the assistant curator and collections project manager. When the museum purchased new camera equipment, she collected oral histories and made some documentaries, including one about quiltmaker Ruby Marzette Adams. Adams’s quilts are dynamically colored and stitched with great attention to detail. Although the museum houses a vast collection of southern folk art, there is often little information about the artists, especially the women. “Adams passed years ago, but her daughters Mae Adams Shelby and Ruth Adams Ball live in the area, so I interviewed them, and they talked about her quilting,” Koshenina said.

Koshenina said the knowledge and techniques she learned in Southern

Studies have been helpful in many ways. “Southern Studies helped me the most with my museum tours and talking to the interns and the other students,” she said. “I’m able to talk about the way that ancient myth has made its way into our common culture.”

Her day-to-day tasks vary, but they include figuring out next exhibits, assisting with Harvest Supper, editing videos, and attending the upcoming Archeological Institute of America meeting in Chicago this January. She also enjoys working with museum director Robert Saarnio. “Robert is always very confident in our abilities, and he lets us have a lot of artistic freedom, which is really nice,” Koshenina said. “Because it is such a small staff, I’ve been helping Melanie Antonelli create exhibits for five years now, which is something that I might not be able to do at a bigger museum. Having creative license, making documentaries, and making things for the exhibits is exciting.”

Koshenina also uses her Southern Studies skills to conduct interviews and to know how to have difficult conversations. “Melanie and I did an exhibit last summer about the fall of 1962 and

the riots. I made a kiosk that contextualized all of it. I really feel like that wouldn’t have been as in-depth without what I learned in Southern Studies,” Koshenina said.

Antonelli, the curator and collections manager at the museum, said Koshenina’s degrees are a unique blend that compliments their two largest collections of Greek and Roman antiquities and southern folk art. “Greta’s skills in video editing, recording, and photography have been invaluable in expanding the museum’s archive and accessibility while also enriching the visitor experience. Through her work, the museum is able to offer more digital content online and in our galleries, as well as generate more museum-produced oral histories,” Antonelli said. “Another of the many values Greta adds to our curatorial team is her passion for storytelling while being respectful of cultures, and she is mindful of accessibility and equity—a practice she developed further in the Center for the Study of Southern Culture.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary





# Gas Station Fuel

*Kate Medley Book Showcases Hidden Gems of the South*

People stop at gas stations for a variety of reasons. For Kate Medley, her focus isn't necessarily on filling up her car or her belly; it's using her camera and her words to show the evolution of gas station food and the various people who add flavor to the cooking and the space.

For the past twenty years, Medley has traveled the South as a photojournalist exploring rural communities and covering news stories, stopping at hundreds of gas stations along the way. "When the lunch cravings set in and the only options are McDonald's or the local gas station, I'll choose the latter every time," Medley said. "What hidden gems will I find on the menu? Who's cooking behind the grill? What language are people speaking as they wait? What's front and center on the community bulletin board? As a bonus, maybe the food will be delicious—it often is—but regardless, look at all the insight about this place I have gained by stopping."







Now, she's turned her habit of exploring those areas into a coffee table book. *Thank You Please Come Again: How Gas Stations Feed & Fuel the American South: A Photographic Road Trip*, published by *The Bitter Southerner*, opens with an essay by Kiese Laymon. According to its website, *The Bitter Southerner* aims to uncover the American South in all its truth and complexity—and in the process to break stereotypes about the region and its people by pushing out important, difficult, and enjoyable stories.

Life often comes full circle. Medley, a resident of Durham, North Carolina, grew up in Jackson, Mississippi. In 2012, Medley wrote a story about gas station food after spending a week in the Mississippi Delta. She pitched that as a feature story to the *Bitter Southerner* shortly after they launched in 2013, and it became one of their most-read stories. When they recently started publishing books, they approached Medley about expanding that story into a book, which fulfilled one of her long-term dreams.

*Thank You Please Come Again* documents Medley's many road trips photographing seventy-five gas stations, convenience stores, and quick stops in eleven states. Along the way, she pulls over for tamales, fried fish, and banh mi. Her images from these stops give insight to the people in those spaces. "When I first started this project, I simply

asked on social media, 'What is your favorite gas station food?' and I was flooded with replies," Medley said. "I quickly learned that this is a topic for which people have very defined opinions. My journey became a mix of stumbling upon places and driving far out of my way to experience a recommended spot."

When she first began the project, she hoped to find that gas stations had become the vanguard for emerging immigrant foodways across the South. In many urban areas, that proved true. "In New Orleans, for instance, I documented gas stations where the cooks had roots in Iraq, Vietnam, and India—all serving the food of those countries to seeming success," Medley said. "The economic reality for many rural gas stations, however, is such that they cannot afford to *not* be selling potato logs and chicken tenders. The community relies on these gas stations to be the one-stop-shop for everything, which often means being the restaurant that accommodates every worker and traveler who might be passing through."

Although the book was just released in early December, it has already received accolades from *Forbes*, NPR, the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, the *Independent* in the United Kingdom, and others.

Medley honed her perspective on the South while earning her MA in Southern Studies in 2007. Her thesis was "Fear, Faith, and the Fatherland: The Complexities of Prejudice in the Civil Rights Movement." "My time at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture helped give me context for this region I call home and the multitude of ways one might approach studying it," Medley said. "At first glance, for instance, some may think this is a book about gas stations. However, my fellow Southern Studies alums, and hopefully many others, will recognize that I'm using gas stations as a lens for interdisciplinary study of the shifting politics, foodways, demographics, sociology, and economics of this region."

Rebecca Lauck Cleary



# A Mississippian in Rennes

*Ted Ownby Visits Université Rennes 2  
as International Chair of the Americas*

Ted Ownby spent the month of October in France as the International Chair of the Americas in the ACE (Anglophonie: Communautés et Écritures) research unit at the Université Rennes 2. During his time there, he held a seminar for doctoral students, presented lectures with undergraduate and graduate students in the Americas program, and spoke at the Institut Franco-Américain.

“My lectures involved my research on the cultural history of Mississippi and the US South,” said Ownby, professor emeritus of history and Southern Studies. One lecture studied the unique story of a Miss Mississippi pageant winner in 1964 who went from a minor figure in a right-wing group to, as an adult, a minister working for racial reconciliation. A second lecture focused on a teenaged diarist in Mississippi in the 1910s who recorded a lynching in her diary but never mentioned it again. The lecture discussed diary-keeping and what people say and choose not to say, along with a short description of the diary-keeper’s life after her teens.

Two lectures discussed the concept of brotherhood and brotherhoodism in the American South in the civil rights era. “It argued that brotherhood was an important religious concept inspiring activism and that brotherhoodism was a right-wing counter-argument that rejected brotherhood as having no room for hierarchies between God and humanity and parents and children,” Ownby said.

He also recorded a lecture titled, “Mississippi’s Jean Valjean,” which studied the story of Tom and Mollie Atkinson from the early 1900s. “Tom Atkinson had escaped from





prison in the late 1800s, and when the state's governor vowed to return him to prison twenty years later, the issue inspired many Mississippians to argue that his behavior as good farmer and family man meant that he deserved a pardon," Ownby said. "Focusing on his wife, Mollie Atkinson, complicated the story because the apparently happy home life Tom Atkinson's supporters imagined was far from true. Most of the lectures took the approach of microhistories, telling small stories of individuals to raise large questions."

Ownby also took part in a discussion with faculty and administrators about the possibility of student exchanges between Université Rennes 2 and the University of Mississippi, and was the subject of two interviews—one for the Rennes 2 University website and one for a student project of three graduate students.

For Ownby, the benefits of his time in Rennes are clear. "I enjoyed living in a fascinating place, exploring the city, and improving my French language skills a bit," he said. "I enjoyed meeting and making friends with colleagues at the university and the Institut Franco-Américain. I expect to keep in touch with people from both institutions. I also benefited by working to give my lectures to audiences far from Mississippi and had plenty of time to write and edit my ongoing scholarly project. I will work to make sure there are continuing benefits for the University of Mississippi and its continuing relationship with the Université Rennes 2."

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Ted Ownby often talks of his fondness for former students. Those students made history by providing for future scholars through the Ted Ownby Initiative to Support Graduate Education. Because of this initiative, graduate students in the years to come will have the opportunity to research and document in an interdisciplinary program. Ownby has always known that history matters, just as the future of Southern Studies does.

After thirty-five years as a member of the University of Mississippi faculty, including eleven years as director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, Ownby retired at the end of June to great fanfare. In the fall, the University of Mississippi started an Ignite campaign that lasted only a few weeks, with a goal of \$5,000. Happily, fifty-seven donors shattered that goal and more than \$10,000 was raised for the fund.

Everyone at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture deeply appreciates all the donors who took the time to contribute funds in Ownby's name for graduate students, which are the heart of the program.

To learn about supporting the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, contact Delia Childers, associate director of development, at [dgchilde@olemiss.edu](mailto:dgchilde@olemiss.edu).

## Center Faculty Receive Grants to Document Rural Life

Last spring, Center faculty received grants from the Community Engaged Partnership Development Fund, which is designed to support development of partnerships between faculty, staff, or students collaborating with a community. One of the projects awarded funding is "The Movement Starts Here," which documents the history and global urgency of environmental justice, led by Melanie Ho, producer-director in the Southern Documentary Project, and John Rash, assistant professor of film production and Southern Studies. The documentary focuses on a rural community in North Carolina that continues to grapple with climate justice and environmental atrocities that mostly affect poor communities of color.

Additionally, the Collaborative Oral Histories with the Emmett Till Interpretive Center, led by Ryan Parsons, assistant professor of sociology and Southern Studies, received support. Parsons also received an Achieving Equity Grant for his oral history work. "The goal of Achieving Equity is to pilot an approach to oral history projects that is more community-driven; partners approach us with ideas for projects that we then help them execute," Parsons said. "The idea is to think about oral history as a service we provide as well as an academic venture."

In fall 2023, Parsons's class worked with members of a historical society to capture oral histories with civil rights-era figures in Holmes County, Mississippi. In Spring 2024, his SST 560 class will be doing interviews with local progressive churches in Lafayette County as part of an oral history of queer religious activism. "The 'content expert' role is also part of the Holmes County collaboration—they are in the process of applying for funding from the Mississippi Humanities Council—and I was able to support them as an academic advisor/consultant," Parsons said.

Parsons received a third award, a \$75,000 grant from the Russell Sage Foundation this past summer. Work on that project will start in earnest in the spring. One of the oldest American foundations, the Russell Sage Foundation was established by Margaret Olivia Sage in 1907 for "the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States," according to its website. "This project is a study of disability in rural America—the focus is on the role that Social Security disability programs (SSDI/SSI) play in supporting people living with disabilities in rural, high poverty contexts," Parsons said. "This summer I'll be working with some UM graduate students to do interviews in rural Arkansas and Louisiana. This project builds on a pilot project I did with collaborators from Princeton in Humphreys County, Mississippi, and an Appalachian county in Kentucky."

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

# What's Brewing in Richmond?

*SFA Documents the Stories behind the Suds*

Oral histories by Sarah I. Rodriguez • Photos by Parker Michels-Boyce

Craft beer has exploded in popularity in Richmond, Virginia, in recent years. But the Virginia capital's relationship with beer goes back much farther. In fact, the first canned beer in the United States—a test run by a New Jersey-based brewery—went on sale in Richmond in January 1935. In 2012 the state of Virginia began to allow retail sales and on-site consumption at breweries. A wave of newcomers joined the city's few existing breweries in opening taprooms and adjoining restaurants.

Through the growth and competition of the last decade, and in spite of the difficult Covid years, Richmond brewers overwhelmingly describe a close-knit, collegial industry that supports and roots for the success of its peers. Through thirteen oral history interviews, SFA's *Tapping into Richmond Beer* oral history project captures a snapshot of Richmond's brewing industry and its community of brewers. Read on to learn more about four of those brewers.

## Kate Lee

Kate Lee is the president of Hardywood Craft Brewery, Richmond's second-oldest operating brewery. While in college, Kate developed an interest in the beer-brewing process during a food-science class on fermentation. She went on to have a twelve-year career at Anheuser-Busch, first in the quality department and then as assistant brewmaster at the Williamsburg, Virginia, brewery. After meeting Hardywood



Kate Lee

Park Craft Brewery cofounders Eric McKay and Patrick Murtaugh, she joined the Hardywood team as the quality assurance director in 2014. Lee's passion for her work is obvious; she is the kind of scientist who likens working with new strains of yeast to "meeting new friends." Not only did she develop Hardywood's quality program, but through the Virginia Craft Brewers Guild, she educates other brewers in the state about the importance of quality assurance and safety. In 2022 Lee became the president of Hardywood. Though she's less involved in day-to-day brewing in this role, she proudly name-checks the Virginia farms from which Hardywood sources ingredients like raspberries, ginger, honey, and malt—and she still gets excited when she sees customers

line up for Hardywood's annual release of Gingerbread Stout.

## David Gott

David "Dave" Gott is the operations manager for Legend Brewing Company in Richmond's Manchester neighborhood. A native Richmonder, Gott first learned about beer from working at the Fan Market in high school and college. He worked in beer distribution before making the move to brewing. Gott joined Legend Brewing Company in 1996, when the brewery existed only as a small basement tasting room. At that time, Manchester was an industrial neighborhood, and many of the bar's regulars worked at a nearby tin foil factory. Now, a new apartment complex with more than one hundred units is





Dave Gott

going up across the street. Gott hopes to see Legend serve as a hub for the growing Manchester community, just as it has been for Richmond's brewing industry. Many of the city's brewers learned their craft at Legend, and Gott remembers them all. "In twenty-eight years, you make a lot of good friends in a business like this," he says.

## An Bui

An Bui is the chief beer officer at Richmond's Mekong restaurant and chief beer operator at the Answer Brewpub. Born in South Vietnam in 1974, Bui moved to Richmond with two of his older brothers in 1985. Their parents joined them in 1992, and the family opened Mekong, a Vietnamese

restaurant, in 1995. Bui began to curate an offering of Belgian beers that complemented the flavors on Mekong's menu. Gradually, he educated patrons about craft beer, and the restaurant's beer list grew to include domestic craft brews. Through those one-on-one interactions, Bui built a loyal customer base for his family's restaurant. At the same time, he was helping the local craft beer industry by educating palates and converting supporters. Encouraged by the growth of Richmond's brewery scene after 2012, Bui opened the Answer Brewpub next door to Mekong in 2014. He's been at it for so long that he's now serving the second generation of Mekong diners and beer connoisseurs. And his early dream of Richmond becoming "a tiny

Eric Jackson



dot on a beer map one day" has more than come true.

## Eric Jackson

Eric Jackson is the president and founder of Capsoul Brewing Collective. A lifelong creative and a longtime hospitality professional, Jackson began blogging about beer while working in hotels in Georgia. Once he moved to Richmond in 2019, the blog evolved into Capsoul Collective, a social media business with a mission to cultivate diversity and inclusion in the Richmond beer scene. With a small team, Capsoul soon expanded from a magazine and podcast to a pop-up brewer and event host. They produced Cohesion, a double IPA, to commemorate and encourage unity in Richmond in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and the racial reckoning of 2020. At pop-up events and brewery collaboration across the city, Jackson loves to help beer-reluctant drinkers find a style they love. Now, he and the Capsoul team are working to open a brick-and-mortar location. When they do, it will be Richmond's first Black-owned brewery.

*This oral history was first published in the Fall 2023 issue of Gravy, the Southern Foodways Alliance's journal.*



An Bui

# Spring 2024 Southern Studies Course Offerings

**The Southern Studies classes this Spring semester focus on a wide variety of topics—on everything from Freedom Summer to southern mythologies to the South and food. See below for what’s on offer.**

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## **SST 103: Southern Mythologies and Popular Culture** **Andrew Donnelly**

This course will examine the myths of the South: those stories told and retold in order to understand southern history, those beliefs about the South’s history that are false, and those ideas that have been romanticized into something more than fact. We’ll look, in particular, to culture for its power to shape these myths and to shape the lives of southerners.

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## **SST 105: The South and Food** **Catarina Passidomo**

SST 105 will explore southern culture, history, identity, and placemaking through the lens of foodways (that is, what people eat, how and where and with whom they eat, and what all of that means). Because the study of foodways is highly interdisciplinary, students will read and consider works spanning several disciplines and methodological approaches. In addition to weekly reading, students will listen to podcasts, read and listen to oral histories, and watch films.

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## **SST 109: Rights and Southern Activism** **W. Ralph Eubanks**

Rights and Southern Activism examines the South, past and present, through the lens of activism, whether for civil rights or human rights. The history of protest at the University of

Mississippi will be a central part of this class, yet connections between the University’s history of protest and other southern movements—such as the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and the civil rights movement more broadly—will be explored. Given the connection between race and protest in the South, a foundational text for this course will be C. Vann Woodward’s *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. This class will not only explore activism, but also the nature of movement power dynamics, connections among activists, the strategies they used, and the opposition they faced.

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## **SST 598 / FS 304: Freedom Summer 1964: Mississippi’s Civil Rights Watershed** **Adam Gussow**

Sixty years ago, Mississippi drew the nation’s attention as more than a thousand college-student volunteers descended on the state to supplement the voter registration and community education work of local civil rights workers. The murders of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman epitomized the organized and often violent resistance those students and workers encountered from segregationists determined to uphold the advantages conferred by white supremacy. Later that summer, Delta resident Fannie Lou Hamer again compelled public attention as a leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, an upstart group that traveled to Atlantic City, New Jersey, for the Democratic national convention and attempted, with only partial success, to motivate the national conscience in the service of the Magnolia State’s liberation. What deep cultural and historical dynamics lay behind this catastrophic collision of values? How did the events of Freedom Summer impact Mississippi, and the nation, in the decades that followed? This course will explore Freedom Summer (and the broader civil rights movement) through a range of texts: histories, memoirs, fiction, film, and song.



# Play. It. *LOUD.*

## *Water Valley Duo Releases New Album*

The title *Loud* offers listeners precise instructions on how to listen to the latest release from Bark, the alternative duo out of Water Valley, Mississippi. The distorted opening notes of “Love Minus Action” prove notions correct, but there’s more to be explored throughout the married couple’s fourth album than volume alone.

Bark is the musical aim of Tim Lee and Susan Bauer Lee, native Mississippians, who have recently re-established themselves in the Mississippi hill country. The two have been making hard-nosed, unflinching music together for two decades, and it shows. *Loud*, a co-release of Cool Dog Sound and Dial Back Sound, boasts the palpable chemistry between Tim and Susan through call-and-response vocal tradeoffs and a no-nonsense production style.

The opening track hits hard with the catchy hooks associated with power pop, matched by the tenacity and drive of punk rock, but what is really striking about this collection of songs are the lyrics.

“Love Minus Action” confronts a state of being overwhelmed by, but not apathetic to the modern age, causing people to feel they have no energy to manifest positive change.

With Susan on lead vocals, “Float” takes a complimentary approach to modernity, alluding to the hoops one must jump through—not to thrive but to merely exist in today’s world. Effortlessly fluid electric sitar phrases and nimble guitar patterns effectively balance out the distressed subject matter, allowing the listener to sing along without too much brooding attached.

The light, airy bounce of “Radar LUV” puts Tim’s power-pop background (the Windbreakers, Let’s Active) on full display. The clever use of analogy makes for a tongue-in-cheek earworm that will stick with you long after you’ve pulled the needle from the record.

The duo switches their tone with a take on the late David Olney tune “James Robertson Must Turn Right.” Olney, a friend of the Lees, tragically passed away onstage in January 2020. The veteran tunesmith’s songs have been interpreted by Emmylou Harris, Steve Earle, and Linda Ronstadt. Bark’s tip of the hat to their friend features Tim and Susan trading verses over a loose, bleary-eyed groove.

“Rock Club” confronts the harsh realities and joys of a



LOST ART PHOTOGRAPHY



lifetime spent performing music in the club scene. “When you think you’re too old, ain’t gonna have much fun. But then you turn it up loud and keep it up until you’re done. So, why would you quit now? Why would you give it all up? All the late nights down at the rock club.” The lyrical double-edge sword could be understood as internal dialogue or a therapy session.

The wisdom contained in “Gutters of Fame” comes from people who’ve

lived the life as described in “Rock Club,” making their pairing in the album’s sequence all the more effective. Lyrical jabs such as, “I spent my days with my eyes on some prize that didn’t even exist,” suggests fame is the dangling carrot to keep the industry cart rolling without any guarantee of attainment.

“Present Tense” closes the record as a drony, downtempo exploration into psychedelia and apathy. Slow phase effects and cavernous reverb bloom with a purposefully lethargic vocal performance from Tim and Susan, whose words sympathetically engage with anyone dwelling on the state of the world: “Clock ticks, you stare at the window. Time slips, and you follow.”

*Loud* is an album made by two partners who’ve had enough varying life experiences to reflect on them and discern what’s truly important. Lyrical themes of being overwhelmed, of stasis, and of self-fulfillment laid atop distorted guitars and unwavering rhythms allow the duo’s fourth LP to be an equally effective listen for a late-night shindig or isolated introspection.

Buy *Loud* directly from the band at [bark-bark-loud.bandcamp.com/album/loud](http://bark-bark-loud.bandcamp.com/album/loud).

Kell Kellum

Welcome to the



## MISSISSIPPI ENCYCLOPEDIA

The award-winning encyclopedia, now online.

The editors of the online Mississippi Encyclopedia recently added a new entry on writer Patti Carr Black. You can find this and other work about life in Mississippi, past and present, online by going to [www.mississippiencyclopedia.org](http://www.mississippiencyclopedia.org).

## Patti Carr Black

Patti Carr Black has published more than twenty books about Mississippi art, history, literature, and culture. In her 1998 book, *Art in Mississippi: 1728–1980*, she explores the works of Mississippi artists, and the volume is still considered the touchstone of books on Mississippi's visual arts culture.

Black was born in Sumner, Mississippi, to parents Velma Lewis Carr and Samuel B. Carr. She has fond memories of her early life despite—or perhaps because of—unusual circumstances: from 1938 to 1940 she lived at the Preventorium in Magee, which was created to help prevent sickly children from contracting tuberculosis. Black's father had recently died, and her mother was a friend of the man who ran the Preventorium. He offered to take Patti in to help take the strain off Patti's mother, who also had a son to raise. Patti found the experience to be a positive one. She later resided with her widowed mother in the Delta Inn, a three-story brick hotel in Sumner.

After graduating from West Tallahatchie High School in 1951, she attended Mississippi State College for Women, where she served as student body president and was chosen Miss MSCW. She graduated magna cum laude, majoring in art history and library science. She would later earn an MA degree from Emory University.

Newly married in 1957, she and her husband, D. Carl Black Jr., moved to Jackson. It was a formative time in Black's life. During the social and political arena of Mississippi in the late 1950s and early 1960s, she worked for and was mentored by Charlotte Capers at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Black developed a lifelong

friendship with Capers and later with Eudora Welty and the Walter Anderson family. In 1964 she and Carl spent a year in New York City, where she took courses at the New School for Social Research. Afterward, they returned to Jackson.

In 1968 Black moved back to New York with her young daughter, Betty, and accepted a temporary position at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She also worked for *Time* magazine as a research librarian. In 1970 she moved back to Jackson, and for the next thirty years worked for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

At the archives she was involved in a wide range of tasks: librarian, exhibits designer, and director of the State Historical Museum (the Old Capitol) and several other state properties.

In 1972 Black established the Mississippi Folklife Program. In 1974 she coordinated Mississippi's participation in the Smithsonian's Folklife Festival, and her groundbreaking civil rights exhibit was the first permanent display of its kind. It later received the award of merit from the American Association for State and Local History in 1987.

After retirement, Black continued writing. In addition to *Art in Mississippi*, she has written numerous books, documentaries, monographs, and guidebooks covering a wide range of subjects. In *The Southern Writers Quiz Book* and *Eudora Welty's Early Escapades*, Black's imaginative, quirky, and whimsical side is evident. In *The Mississippi Story*, based on her curated exhibit by that name at the Mississippi Museum of Art, she reveals her knowledge and understanding of Mississippi art and culture. As editor, she helped Agnes Grinstead Anderson, wife of artist Walter Anderson, compile



PHOTO COURTESY CHRIS JENKINS, MUW UNIVERSITY RELATIONS

Patti Carr Black

the book *Approaching the Magic Hour: Memories of Walter Anderson*.

She has received numerous awards. In 2019 she received the Mississippi Humanities Council Cora Norman Award, which recognized her lifetime achievement in the public humanities. In 2014 she was awarded an honorary doctorate of humane letters from Mississippi University for Women. She received a 1999 nonfiction award from the Mississippi Institute of Arts and Letters and the Noel Polk Lifetime Achievement award in 2013. In 1993 she received a Governor's Award for Career in the Arts. She has received awards from the Mississippi Historical Society, the American Association for State and Local History, and the Mississippi Craftsman's Guild.

Mattie Ford  
University of Mississippi

*The Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Mississippi Encyclopedia are grateful to the Mississippi Humanities Council for its continued support of this project.*



## CONTRIBUTORS

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

**Rebecca Lauck Cleary** is the Center's communications specialist. She received a BA in journalism from the University of Mississippi and her MA in Southern Studies.

**Mattie Ford** is a Southern Studies and Honors College BA graduate.

**Lucy Gaines** is a graduate of the Southern Studies MA program (2023) and is currently a student in the Southern Studies MFA in Documentary Expression program.

**Kell Kellum** is the Center's operations assistant and a touring and studio musician. He has a BA in Southern Studies (2014) and an album of instrumental music titled *Adding to the Ashes*.

**Katie McKee** is the director of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies and English.

**Sarah I. Rodriguez** is a public historian who lives in Richmond, Virginia.

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**Correction:** In the Fall 2023 issue we erroneously stated that "Governor Phil Bryant used his office to steer the spending of millions of federal welfare dollars to benefit his family and friends, including NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Brett Favre." The *Southern Register* has no evidence that Governor Bryant embezzled welfare or any other public funds.

## In Memoriam

**Leon Litwack**

December 2, 1929–

August 5, 2023

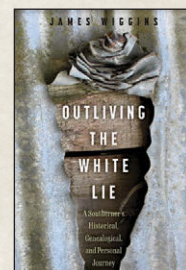
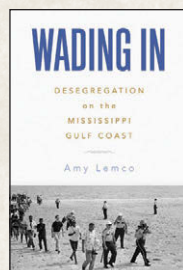
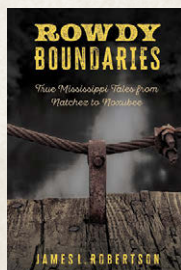
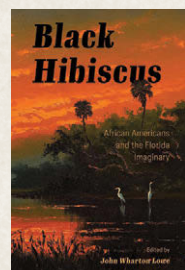
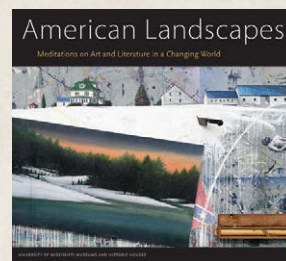
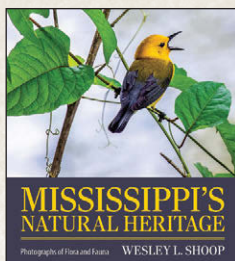
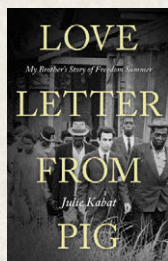
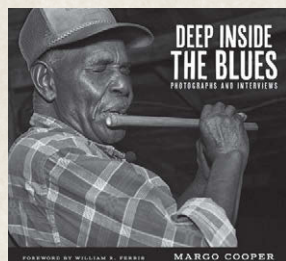
**John Wharton Lowe III**

August 10, 1945–

August 5, 2023



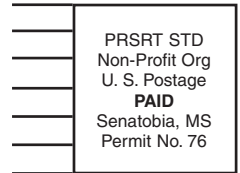
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