

THE SOUTHERN REGISTER

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Southern Culture

The University of Mississippi

NEWSLETTER

OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI, U.S.A.

WINTER 2020

Celebrating 50 Years of *Living Blues*





Writing “2020” still feels to me like the beginning a science fiction novel. Yet here in our fifth decade, the Center for the Study of Southern Culture is looking to a future even beyond the monumental year we are beginning. Last August, we held a “visioning” session involving all thirty of the people whose work is primarily connected to the Center, including everyone at the Southern Documentary Project, the Southern Foodways Alliance, and *Living Blues* magazine, as well as all faculty and staff. Under the direction of the incomparable Ari Weinzweig of ZingTrain, our guiding question was straightforward but not simple to answer: what will the Center look like ten years from now, in 2029?

Our brainstorming began over two days in late summer, but the results have sustained us through the fall as we continued working in smaller groups to hone our priorities. Ari encouraged us not to get our feet tangled in details just yet but to use thick description as means of seeing the Center as it could be a decade hence. We have been circulating drafts of our vision internally for several months, and we are excited now to share an abbreviated version of it with you. Over the course of our extended conversations, seven commitments emerged as central to our shared future.

Developing Meaningful Collaboration leads us to seek both internal and external partners. Within the Center, units work together on common themes uniting our programming and our classrooms. Beyond the Center, we initiate partnerships with other offices and groups on campus, with other colleges and universities, and with community groups who hold a stake in our focus areas. As a starting point, our programming theme for spring 2020 is “Movement and Migration in, to, and through the US South,” and topics proposed for the future include voting rights and climate change.

Building Student Community grows the enrollment in our BA in Southern Studies, our three-track MA (thesis, documentary, and internship), and our MFA in Documentary Expression, all while emphasizing the value of interdisciplinarity in a profoundly interconnected world.

In our vision, students come from a variety of backgrounds, receive full financial support, and graduate to fulfilling employment.

Investing in People means that not only do we continue to attract and retain top faculty and staff, but we also hire with an eye toward diversifying our makeup and remain committed to nurturing the creativity of everyone who works in Southern Studies once they get here. We build our areas of expertise by hiring additional faculty who study the history and experiences of African Americans, Latinx people, and Native Americans in the South.

Creating Transformative Learning and Engaging Communities takes the Center’s knowledge, tools, and resources off campus both to share our work and to learn more about the work we can and should be doing. Here the potential arises for partnerships with the UM School of Education and the UM Division of Diversity and Inclusion as ways of deepening our relations with the immediate communities of Oxford and Lafayette County, but also with broader audiences in Mississippi. Eventually we hire a Community Engagement staff member who facilitates work like the projects we already have on the ground in Yalobusha and Marshall Counties.

Designing Inclusive Infrastructure allows our physical space to reflect our unified mission. First, we upgrade our current facilities in Barnard Observatory to showcase more fully the scope of our work. Second, we add a Documentary Arts Wing, complete with teaching labs, multimedia production facilities, gallery space, and an auditorium that houses multiple events. In this part of the vision, the Center has an in-house library and digital archive, as well as a full-time archivist.

Funding the Future acknowledges that innovation comes at a price. Here we envision a full-time Center development officer, as well as a reconfigured Center Advisory Committee whose members continue to have broad interests and creative ideas that span fundraising, outreach, and alumni relations.

Finally, **Earning Global Recognition** dedicates the Center to raising its regional, national, and international profiles so that both scholars and nonscholars find our work to be groundbreaking and useful. Not coincidentally, the Center has revitalized our Future of the South initiative, which focuses on questions and issues immediately relevant to the region’s current challenges and anticipates those that may arise in coming years.

We will be regularly measuring our decisions and our opportunities against the ambitious vision we outlined together, and we invite you to join us in thinking about the now and future South. 2029 will be here before we know it.

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On the cover: A detail from *Memories and Time*, by KC.

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Living Blues News

The bass may be the Rodney Dangerfield of the blues band—it just doesn't get any respect. It is the most unheralded and misunderstood instrument on the bandstand. Many fans don't really get the role of the bass and its place in music. To put it simply, the bass provides the connection between rhythm and melody, holding down the bottom end with the drums while helping to propel the melody with the guitar and vocals. *LB* has dedicated issues to every other instrument in the blues (even two drummer issues), and two bass players have graced our cover (Willie Dixon and Willie Kent), but this is our first issue devoted exclusively to the bass player. With this special issue we have now paid tribute to the complete blues band.

Inside, we cover eight of the top bass players in the blues today, plus this issue's *Let It Roll* column focuses on Willie Dixon's Big Three Trio, who each has his own approach to the bass. Lil' Ed's bass-playing brother Pookie Young says his role is "holding the backbeat; stay in the pocket, and let them build off of that." Floyd McDaniel's son E.G. McDaniel says, "I'm a firm believer that the best friend a bass player can have is

a drummer, and vice versa. You lay the foundation harmonica players, guitar players, even keyboard players can spring off of." And bass legend Jerry Jemmott who, due to a crushed cochlea, can't really even hear the bass. His unique approach has been: "I mainly followed horn players and singers . . . not being able to hear what everybody else was playing. I had to make up what I *thought* should be played." So here is our take on the blues bass player—the low down on the low end.

We recently lost one of the sweetest persons in the blues world. Beverly "Guitar" Watkins, who died on October 1, was a gem. She was an eighty-year-old grandmother, but she was also one badass guitar player and stage performer. Watkins came into the blues at a time when female guitar players were a rarity. While she never achieved stardom, she did follow her dream and affected everyone who ever saw her play. She certainly had an impact on me.

As we close out 2019, we take a few extra pages to catch up on some of the obituaries we missed earlier. An unfortunate reality of covering the blues world is that obits are often the only national coverage some local artists get.



I also want to give our readers an update on writer Lee Hildebrand. As many of you know Lee suffered a stroke two years ago and has been unable to write since then. I caught up with him a couple weeks ago, and he is living comfortably in VA housing (Lee is a Vietnam veteran) in California, still passionately listening to music and reading, and trying to keep a good attitude on the cards life has dealt him.

It seems impossible, but 2020 marks *LB*'s fiftieth anniversary. Stay tuned for several special issues to celebrate our golden moment.

Brett J. Bonner

In Memoriam

Elizabeth Spencer

July 19, 1921–December 23, 2019



southtalks

SERIES

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOUTHERN CULTURE

Winter 2020

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 takes place in the Tupelo Room of Barnard Observatory unless otherwise noted. Visit the Center's website, southernstudies.olemiss.edu, for up-to-date-information about all Center events.

FEBRUARY 3

Monday, 5:30 p.m.

Barnard Observatory

“Moving Spirits: History of the Enslaved and Civil Rights through Dance and Song”

Jennifer Mizenko and Rhondalyn Peairs

Do you know the stories of the enslaved persons who built the University of Mississippi buildings that you walk into on a daily basis? What is the ideology behind the symbols that are found on campus? In this SouthTalk, members of the Lafayette/Oxford/University of Mississippi community embody local history through dance and song.

Jennifer Mizenko is a professor of dance at the University of Mississippi. She has a BA in psychology from Kenyon College and an MA in dance from The Ohio State University. Rhondalyn Peairs is an Oxford native, an educator, and a local historian. She is a graduate of Tougaloo College and is currently enrolled in the Southern Studies MA program at the University of Mississippi.

FEBRUARY 5

Wednesday, noon

Barnard Observatory

“Fighting Prison Nation: The Nation of Islam’s Challenge to Criminalization”

Garrett Felber



Garrett Felber discusses his new book, *Those Who Know Don’t Say: The Nation of Islam, the Black Freedom Struggle, and the Carceral State*, a political history of the NOI that documents the interplay between law enforcement and Muslim communities in the postwar United States. His talk highlights familiar figures in new ways while highlighting the forgotten organizing of rank-and-file activists in prisons. Felber shows how state repression and Muslim organizing laid the groundwork for the modern carceral state and the contemporary prison abolition movement that opposes it.

Garrett Felber is an assistant professor of history at the University of Mississippi. His research and teaching focus on twentieth-century African American social movements and US social and political history, Black radicalism, and the carceral state.

FEBRUARY 12

Wednesday, noon

Barnard Observatory

TrueSouth

John T. Edge and Wright Thompson



TrueSouth is an SEC/ESPN series. The documentary-style show explores contemporary southern identity. Each episode leverages Southern Studies ideas and personalities to explore one city through two restaurants. Wright Thompson is executive producer, and John T. Edge is host. Both will join us to screen their Memphis episode, which features, among others, Zandria Robinson, a former Center colleague.

John T. Edge directs the SFA, writes about foodways, and teaches in the University of Georgia’s MFA program in narrative nonfiction. Wright Thompson is a writer and filmmaker for ESPN. He lives in Oxford, Mississippi, with his family.

FEBRUARY 13

Thursday, 11:00 a.m.

Overby Center Auditorium

“Advancing Each Other: Building Coalitions across Communities”

Mandy Carter



Mandy Carter is a human rights activist and a legend in the LGBTQ+ community. A resident of Durham, North Carolina, she is a cofounder of Southerners on New Ground (SONG), a human rights organization devoted to uniting LGBTQ+ people in the South and to assisting poor, rural, and working-class southerners in becoming leaders in shaping the region’s future. Her talk focuses on her fifty-two years of

grassroots activism. She explores how diverse communities might unite around shared goals of peace and justice. Her visit is cosponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, School of Journalism and New Media, the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies, and the Center for Inclusion and Cross-Cultural Engagement.

FEBRUARY 19

Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.

Barnard Observatory

“The Women of Yalobusha County”

Dottie Chapman Reed, with Colton Babbitt, Michelle Bright, Brittany Brown, Keon Burns, and Rhondalyn Peairs

During the fall semester, five students in SST 560, Oral History of Southern Social Movements, taught by Jessie Wilkerson, collaborated with Dottie Chapman Reed to develop the Black Families of Yalobusha County Oral History Project. Reed, who lives in Atlanta, is a member of the University of Mississippi Class of '74, grew up in Water Valley, and writes the column “Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha County” for the *North Mississippi Herald*. The students of SST 560 will present a multivocal, multilayered history based on interviews from their oral history project. Dottie Chapman Reed will speak during the Summit on Women and Civic Engagement sponsored by the Sarah Isom Center for Women and Gender Studies earlier that day.

FEBRUARY 20

Thursday, 5:30 p.m.

Barnard Observatory

**MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION
SERIES LECTURE**

“Imagine Freedom: Sounding Yanga’s Cry across Gulf Shores”

Dolores Flores-Silva and Keith Cartwright

In the mountains of Veracruz from 1570 to 1609, a young African-born Gaspar Yanga led resistance against the Spanish and forced recognition of his group’s freedom, self-governance, and rights to the land. *Yanga’s Freedom Cry* addresses the legacy of this Maroon community and its founder through interviews with residents of Yanga, Veracruz, and adjacent towns. The film pays homage to the Africans who won their freedom and examines how Yanga’s triumph and Afro-Mexican legacies still challenge us in spaces shaped by racial legacies across the Gulf.

Dolores Flores-Silva, from the Mexican Gulf state of Veracruz, is professor of Latin American literature

and culture at Roanoke College. She writes on topics ranging from Maya poetry to Afro-Mexican history. Keith Cartwright is chair and professor of English at the University of North Florida and served as Fulbright-Robles Chair of US studies at Universidad de las Américas Puebla. Cartwright and Flores-Silva are collaborating on a book project and series of documentary films examining the Gulf of Mexico as a transnational region and enduring cross-cultural frontier.

FEBRUARY 26

Wednesday, noon

Barnard Observatory

**MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION
SERIES LECTURE**

**“Their Own Kind of Removal:
Lumbee Indians in the
Antebellum South”**

Malinda Maynor Lowery



For the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina, their long struggle has entailed working through the South’s racial binary and resisting the erasure that seemed an inevitable outcome of Indian Removal. The Lumbees persisted in an increasingly hostile environment by adapting some aspects of white culture, including apprenticeship and marriage, and by building literacy and practicing Christianity. Others participated in black market activities and met social challenges through legal channels. Their efforts provided a sense of social unity that defined their sense of belonging and defined them as a distinct community in a biracial region.

Malinda Maynor Lowery is a professor of history at UNC-Chapel Hill and director of the Center for the Study of the American South. She is a member of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. She is the author of *The Lumbee Indians: An American Struggle*.

MARCH 4

Wednesday, noon

Barnard Observatory

**MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION
SERIES LECTURE**

**“Racist Kitsch for the Twenty-
First Century? Anthropomorphic
Asians, *Kawaii*-style, and the
Culture of Cute”**

Leslie Bow



We understand the harm embodied by mammy cookie jars, minstrel coin banks, and any number of household items depicting African Americans during the Jim Crow

era, yet these demeaning anthropomorphic objects have found new iterations in the twenty-first century: the global circulation of the Asian figure as saltshaker, kitchen timer, and decor. How is it that such commodities manage to circumvent taboos surrounding ethnic caricature that now surround their infamous progenitors in the US South? How do these new forms of racial kitsch evade contextualization as *racist kitsch*?

In part, the answer lies in the rise of the Japanese style known as *kawaii* or “cute style” since the 1970s, an aesthetic form that has specific resonance for Asian racialization. This talk explores the racial feelings that the “cute” enables and draws upon narratives of African American collectors of black memorabilia to engage Asian Americans’ ambivalent relationship to racialized *kawaii* things.

Leslie Bow is Vilas Distinguished Achievement Professor of English and Asian American Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

MARCH 4
Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.
Nutt Auditorium
Skrontch Music



Skrontch Music is a project led by saxophonist, clarinetist, and composer Byron Asher that explores the histories and lineages of jazz in the South through contemporary soundscapes. Featuring a ten-piece New Orleans-based ensemble, Skrontch Music’s debut album incorporates elements of sound collage and text from primary source documents to address the intertwined histories of the formation of New Orleans jazz and anti-Jim Crow activism. The ensemble will present material that uses similar techniques to investigate the blues and the radically political and musical themes that are embedded within them. Sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Department of Music.

MARCH 18
Wednesday, noon
Barnard Observatory

MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION
SERIES LECTURE

“From Latino Orlando to International Memphis: Migration and Transformation in the American South”

Simone Delerme



Simone Delerme will share her ethnographic research that documents the ways that southern places are

being transformed by an influx of migrants, primarily Latino. How are these newcomers incorporated into the social, political, and economic life of communities that were nontraditional destinations of migration, and how are they challenging the South’s historic black-white racial binary?

Simone Delerme joined the University of Mississippi’s Department of Sociology and Anthropology and Center for the Study of Southern Culture in the fall of 2013. She specializes in migration to the US South, with interests in race relations, integration and incorporation, community development, and social class inequalities.

MARCH 18
Wednesday, 5:00 p.m.
Overby Center Auditorium

VISITING DOCUMENTARIANS
SERIES

Always in Season

Jacqueline Olive



Jacqueline Olive is an independent filmmaker and immersive media producer with fifteen years of experience in journalism and film. *Always in Season*, her debut feature documentary, explores the lingering impact of more than a century of lynching and connects this form of racial terrorism with racial violence today. The film follows Claudia Lacy as she moves from paralyzing grief to leading the fight for justice for her son, Lennon Lacy, who was found hanging from a swing set in rural North Carolina in 2014. As the film unfolds, Lennon’s case—and the suspicions surrounding it—intersect with stories of other communities committed to breaking the silence of their own recent histories and leading the way to justice. This event is cosponsored by the Oxford Film Festival, March 18–22.

MARCH 25
Wednesday, noon
Barnard Observatory

“Do you know what it means?” New Orleans Englishes”

Christina Schoux Casey

Christina Schoux Casey is associate professor of English linguistics at Aalborg University, Denmark. Her research focuses on New Orleans Englishes and how language intersects with cultural commodification, neoliberal globalization, authenticity, and nostalgia. Casey will discuss New Orleans language, from Who Dat! to bounce music to Vietnamese and French.



APRIL 7
Tuesday, 5:30
Overby Center Auditorium

You Asked for the Facts

Mary Blessey

In 1966 four years after the historic enrollment of James Meredith at the University of Mississippi, student activists devised a plan to defy Mississippi's speaker ban and bring Robert F. Kennedy to the university to reveal the truth about former governor and staunch segregationist Ross Barnett.

Mary Blessey is a Mississippi filmmaker and recent graduate of the Center's MFA in Documentary Expression program. She received her MA in Southern Studies, also from the University of Mississippi, and she is the owner and founder of her production company, Holley Street Media. Her film, *You Asked for the Facts*, is a component of Blessey's MFA thesis project.



race/ethnicity, migration, labor, political mobilization, and social inequalities.

APRIL 15
Wednesday, 5:30 p.m.
Barnard Observatory

“Black Food Geographies: Race, Self-Reliance, and Food Access”

Ashanté Reese

Using Washington, DC, as a launching point, this talk explores how structural racism shapes our national food system and how communities define, critique, and navigate contemporary food access inequities.

Ashanté Reese is an assistant professor in the department of geography and environmental sciences at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.



APRIL 8
Wednesday, noon
Barnard Observatory

“The Teacher-Shortage Crisis, the Alternate Route, and the Mississippi Teacher Corps Thirty Years Later”

Andrew Mullins

Andrew Mullins will discuss Mississippi's teacher shortage and its causes, as well as the alternate route and the thirty-year history of the Mississippi Teacher Corps.

Andrew Mullins served as chief of staff to University of Mississippi chancellors, and worked under chancellors Gerald Turner, Robert Khayat, and Dan Jones. He is emeritus associate professor of education and a founder of the Mississippi Teacher Corps.

APRIL 15
Wednesday, noon
Barnard Observatory

MOVEMENT AND MIGRATION SERIES LECTURE

“Slaughterhouse South: Migration, Ethnoracial Boundaries, and the Social Organization of Labor”

Vanesa Ribas

Drawing on sixteen months of work as a meatpacker in a North Carolina slaughterhouse, Vanesa Ribas investigates the intergroup dynamics between migrants and native-born workers, showing how the experience of oppressive exploitation mediates relations between Latina/o migrants, African Americans, and whites.

Vanesa Ribas is an associate professor of sociology at the University of California, San Diego. She studies

APRIL 22
Wednesday, noon
Barnard Observatory

“Burial Ground Is Common Ground: Connecting Communities through Research/Performance”

Chuck Yarborough

Southern Studies alum Chuck Yarborough and students from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science will share and discuss the transformative individual and community impact of award-winning research/performance projects produced at their Columbus, Mississippi, school.

Chuck Yarborough (MA '95) has taught high school history classes at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science since 1995. He has been recognized with multiple awards for teaching and community service, including being named 2019 Tachau Teacher of the Year by the Organization of American Historians and 2018 Social Studies Educator of the Year by the Mississippi Council for the Social Studies.



APRIL 30
Thursday, 3:00–5:00 p.m.
Butler Auditorium in the Inn at Ole Miss

FUTURE OF THE SOUTH INITIATIVE LECTURE

“LGBTQ+ Activism and Advocacy in Mississippi”

Co-hosted by the Isom Center and part of the Oxford Pride schedule, we will hear from advocates and activists about their work to make Mississippi a more welcoming, safer, and fairer state for LGBTQ+ people.

Po' Monkey's: Portrait of a Juke Joint

Photos and text by Will Jacks

For ten years I spent many Thursday nights at Po' Monkey's Lounge, a juke joint outside of Merigold, Mississippi. In the late 1990s this iconic location became the biggest marketing piece used by the state of Mississippi in its quest to promote—and economize—its rich musical heritage. The Mississippi Delta, and its unparalleled history of the blues, was the most significant part of an economic plan to build an economy around cultural tourism.

Lauded as “the last of the rural juke joints,” Po' Monkey's somehow managed to keep a loyal local following while increasingly attracting tourists from around the world. Blues purists bemoaned the marketing push that undermined the juke's authenticity, but the core crowd that had been coming since the '60s was still very much around when Willie “Po' Monkey” Seaberry—the owner and namesake of the space—passed away in 2016.

I went in search of a story, but what I found was so much more. I



found a home. I found friendships, and I found the most unexpected mentor. Willie Seaberry was one of my greatest teachers.

When I first visited Willie's juke joint I was intrigued by its myth. I'd heard stories and had even visited once or twice in the early

'90s while in college. On those early trips I wasn't seeking to understand anything. I just wanted a beer or two. I was young and clueless as to the significance of the place and the man who ran it. By the time I returned, years later, I mostly wanted to understand why the rest of the world had added a visit to Willie's juke to their bucket list.

What I found was a deeper connection to my home. I reconnected with classmates from high school who I'd lost touch with despite the fact that as adults we lived only a few minutes away from one another. I realized that without the formal structure of school to bring us together, we'd allowed life to pull us into smaller and smaller worlds. Willie Seaberry provided a new structure for our reunions, and just as I forged a bond with the classmates of my youth, so, too, did I form deep connections to those who visited the lounge regularly.

Those are the bonds that made Po' Monkey's special. We came because





we enjoyed one another. We came to laugh and celebrate and dance and sing together. We drank together. We ate together. On July 14, 2016, we cried together. We are all still seeking that joyous space that closed the night Willie left us.

Since Mr. Seaberry's passing I've realized what it all meant, and why we were so lucky. On the Thursday following his death, a celebration was held at Sky Box in Shelby. When I entered the club, the space was certainly different, but the people were the same. The following week we moved to Annie Bell's in Clarksdale, and the week after that we gathered at the Old Time Blues Place in Marks. We talked about Mr. Seaberry, we toasted his life, and we were grateful for him bringing us all together.

I hope this work honors him appropriately.



Will Jacks is a photographer, curator, storyteller, and educator of culture and relationships in the Mississippi Delta, the Lower Mississippi River region, and the American South. He teaches photography and documentary courses in the Mississippi Delta.

The Future of the South

Although the year 2020 seems futuristic in and of itself, faculty at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture are looking beyond the present with a scholarly eye to the next twenty years and more.

The Future of the South initiative focuses on the contemporary region and shapes conversations about how it will evolve, using innovative approaches to studying the South within the context of the nation, hemisphere, and the globe. Programming in this designation has three elements: the topic has a presence in the curriculum, it figures prominently in the scholarship of at least one Southern Studies faculty member, and it extends itself to a form of community engagement for a broader audience.

“We hope it’s a way for faculty to lift up their own interests and share them with broader audiences,” said Katie McKee, director of the Center and McMullan Professor of Southern Studies and Professor of English.

Several programs are set for this spring. “The first Future of the South focus we have is movement and migration into and through the United States South,” said McKee.

Simone Delorme, McMullan associate professor of Southern Studies and Anthropology, came up with the movement and migration concept. “Simone’s idea has each of the three components: a classroom presence, a role in her scholarship about Latinx migration, and a public-leaning community engagement piece which culminates in the fall with the Hostile Terrain 94 art installation.”

Delorme’s SST 612 Globalization in the US South class is an interdisciplinary graduate course about globalization in the American South, with an emphasis on migration. “We will be examining the interconnections that link people and nations economically, politically, and culturally to



understand how powerful global forces are shaping local realities and conditions in a variety of southern states,” Delorme said. “Additionally, we will look at the historical antecedents to the current phase of globalization to examine longer historical connections, similarities, and differences between past global exchanges and the most current forms. Each week’s readings will evoke a series of critical questions about place-specific politics, social experiences, and economic relationships in the US South.”

One project the class will work on is documenting the migration of Vietnamese refugees to Memphis, Tennessee using a series of articles from the archives of one of the Shelby County public libraries.

The public-facing part of the movement and migration idea is Hostile Terrain 94, a participatory art project sponsored and organized by the Undocumented Migration Project, a nonprofit research-art-education-media collective, directed by anthropologist Jason De Leon. The exhibition is composed of 3,200 handwritten toe tags that represent migrants who have died trying to cross the Sonoran Desert of Arizona between the mid-1990s and 2019.

These tags are geolocated on a wall map of the desert showing the exact locations where remains were found.

This installation will simultaneously take place at 150 locations in 2020 both in the US and across the world.

The University of Mississippi installation is a partnership with the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and will be displayed on the walls of Lamar Hall.

Five SouthTalks will also have a focus on movement and migration, including Keith Cartwright and Dolores Flores-Silva on February 20, Malinda Maynor Lowery on February 26, Leslie Bow on March 4, Delorme on March 18, and Vanesa Ribas on April 15.

Other professors working on the Future of the South initiative programs are Jessie Wilkerson with the Invisible Histories project, and Andy Harper and Rex Jones using a multimedia class to examine climate change, specifically at the Bonnet Carre spillway.

“We will have a Future of the South speaker at the Oxford Conference for the Book on April 1,” McKee said. “Maurice Carlos Ruffin will talk about the urgent questions that may face literary artists in the present moment in the South. His novel *We Cast a Shadow* is futuristic, so thinking about the future of the South is not a stretch for him.”

Ruffin will also be at the Southern Foodways Alliance fall symposium, and SFA programming for 2020 is also the Future of the South.

The Future of the South initiative is based on a generous grant provided to the Center by the Hardin Foundation, which shares the Center’s deep investment in the future of Mississippi and the education of all Mississippians.

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi Launched during Tupelo Pride, 2019

On October 11, 2019, the Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi (IHP-MS) launched at Tupelo Pride's opening event, held at the Link Centre. The mission of IHP-MS is to document and preserve the history of LGBTQ Mississippians. Co-project directors Amy McDowell (sociology) and I, and graduate assistants Maddie Shapple (sociology) and Hooper Schultz (Southern Studies) were joined by Joshua Burford and Maigen Sullivan, the directors of the first and primary IHP site in Alabama. Students from McDowell's and my graduate seminars in sociology and Southern Studies also attended.

The Tupelo Pride organizers gave the IHP-MS team the opportunity to spread the word about the project and invite people to participate. We had an information table and two pop-up exhibits. One exhibit showcased a selection of record covers from the collection of Charles Smith, known as DJ Prince Charles, a record aficionado who provided the soundtrack to several gay bars in North Mississippi in the 1990s and early 2000s. His record collection is now housed in Archives and Special Collections at the University of Mississippi. For the second exhibit, Shapple and Schultz curated "ethno-poems" from oral history interviews that they completed as part of the Queer Mississippi Oral History Project, directed by McDowell and me. The main event was a drag show, featuring local performers and emceed by GoDiva Holliday, who was also interviewed for the oral history project.

The following day the IHP-MS team attended the second annual Tupelo Pride Festival at Fairpark

in downtown Tupelo. Many people stopped by the table to see the archival documents—magazines, photographs, newsletters, and memorabilia—on exhibit and to discuss donating materials or recording an oral history interview. On Sunday, McDowell and I wrapped up the IHP-MS launch at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Oxford, where we were invited to speak about the project's mission and goals.

With funding from a Mellon grant and in collaboration with IHP directors Joshua Burford and Maigen Sullivan, we founded IHP-MS in April 2019. With support from the Isom Center, Archives and Special Collections, and the Center for the Study of Southern Culture (which has included the project in its Future of the South Initiative), IHP-MS

hopes to expand the reach of the project. If you are interested in learning more about the project or possibly donating manuscript collections or print materials, please contact Jessie Wilkerson (jcwilker@olemiss.edu).

IHP-MS will be hosting a one-day symposium, "LGBTQ+ Activism and Advocacy in Mississippi," on the campus of the University of Mississippi on Thursday, April 30, 3:00–5:00 p.m. At the event, cohosted with the Isom Center and part of the Oxford Pride schedule, we will hear from advocates and activists about their work to make Mississippi a more welcoming, safer, and fairer state for LGBTQ+ people. Check the Center's website for more information.

Jessie Wilkerson



(Left to right): Maddie Shapple, Amy McDowell, Jessie Wilkerson, and Hooper Schultz, at the Tupelo Pride drag show, where they exhibited a record collection and oral history interviews from the Invisible Histories Project-Mississippi.

The Twenty-Seventh Oxford Conference for the Book April 1–3, 2020

Ernest Hemingway said, “There is no friend as loyal as a book,” and both friends and book lovers converge for the Twenty-Seventh Oxford Conference for the Book, April 1–3, 2020.

It is the longest-running event produced by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and is always free and open to the public. Events will take place on the University of Mississippi campus and around Oxford.

Beginning the conference at 11:00 a.m. on Wednesday, April 1, Craig Gill, John Langston, JoAnne Pritchard Morris, and Tonia Lonie will celebrate fifty years of publishing by the University Press of Mississippi. Founded in 1970, UPM is the publishing arm of all of Mississippi’s state universities and has long been a friend to the Center, publishing the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, the Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha series, and various

other Center faculty work. They will discuss the history and future of the press at a luncheon sponsored by the Friends of the Library in the Faulkner Room in Archives and Special Collections in the J. D. Williams Library on the UM campus. Lunch is free, but reservations are appreciated.

This year’s participants also include poets Julian Randall, Laure-Anne Bosselaar and Gabrielle

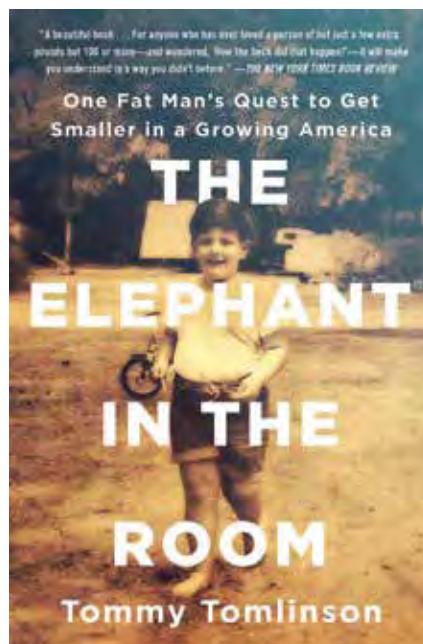
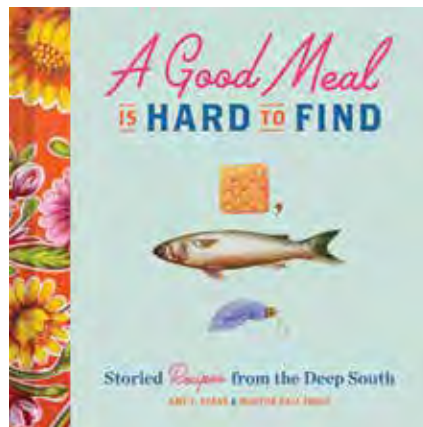
Calvocoresi, in honor of April as National Poetry Month. The celebration of poetry takes place each April, was introduced in 1996, and is organized by the Academy of American Poets as a way to increase awareness and appreciation of poetry. The panel, Thursday at 4:30 p.m. at Southside Gallery, will be moderated by Beth Ann Fennelly, Mississippi poet laureate and UM professor of English.

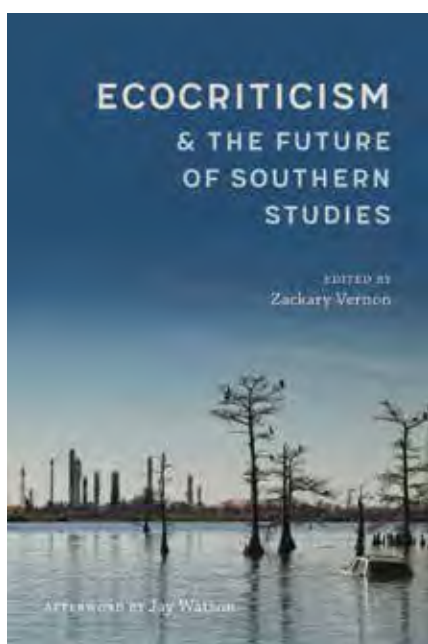
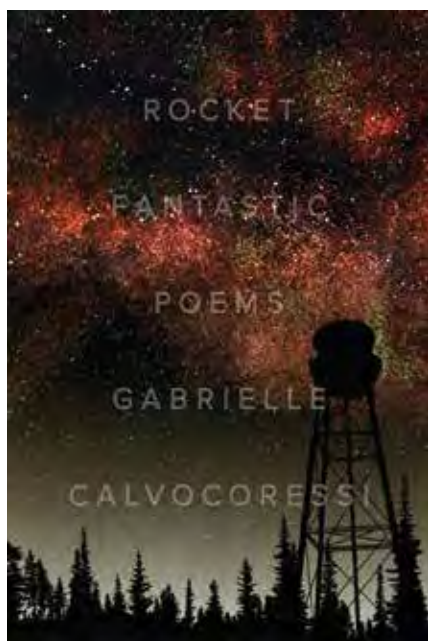
Authors and sessions are still being added to the schedule, but confirmed participants include Dorothy Allison, Maurice Carlos Ruffin, Jeff Sharlet, Tommy Tomlinson, Laura-Gray Street, Lily King, Zachary Vernon, Jay Watson, and Joseph M. Thompson.

On Wednesday evening the Book Conference Authors Party will be held at the Brandt Memory House at 406 University Avenue and is co-hosted again by Friends of the J. D. Williams Library. Attendees have an opportunity to mingle with fellow conference attendees and guest writers at this fundraiser, which is \$50 per person. All reservations are made online.

A session on “Ecocriticism and the Future of Southern Studies” is set for Thursday, April 2, at 9:30 a.m., followed by a “Music in the South” session at 11:00 a.m. In the afternoon, at 2:30 p.m., the Southern Foodways Alliance presents chef and author Martha Foose and former SFA oral historian Amy Evans with *A Good Meal is Hard to Find: Storied Recipes from the Deep South*.

As in past years, *Thacker Mountain Radio* will host a special Oxford Conference for the Book show at the Lyric Theatre at 1006 Van Buren Avenue on Thursday, April 2. The





two Lambda Literary Awards and the American Library Association Prize for Lesbian and Gay Writing. Allison will be in conversation with Sarah Heying, a PhD student in English literature at the University of Mississippi, where she researches lesbian and trans aesthetics in periodicals, comix, and genre fiction from the 1970s to now, with a particular focus on literature written in or about the South and the Midwest.

At noon on Friday, the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library at 401 Bramlett Boulevard will host a poetry talk and lunch with Laure-Anne Bosselaar, a Belgian-American poet, translator, and professor. She is the author of four collections of poetry, most recently, *These Many Rooms*. Both the lunch and talk are free, but reservations are required.

Campus visitors may purchase parking passes for \$3/day at the welcome center on University Ave., adjacent to the Grove, upon arrival to the conference each day.

The Oxford Conference for the Book is sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and Square Books, and supported by the Lafayette County Literacy Council, the J. D. Williams Library, the Friends of the J. D. Williams Library, the Overby Center for Southern Journalism and Politics, the John and Renée Grisham Writers Fund, the Junior Auxiliary of Oxford, and the Lafayette County and Oxford Public Library.

The conference is partially funded by the University of Mississippi, a contribution from the R&B Feder Foundation for the Beaux Arts, a grant from the Mississippi Humanities Council, and promotional support from Visit Oxford.

To learn more about the authors and register for special events, visit the conference website at www.oxfordconference-forthebook.com and the conference's Facebook page. The conference schedule will be posted online this February.

guest author is Leesa Cross-Smith, author of *So We Can Glow: Stories*.

Friday's sessions are held at the Lafayette County Courthouse on the Oxford Square and conclude with a reception and book signing at Off Square Books.

This year the Oxford Conference for the Book is happily partnering with the Glitterary Festival to bring author Dorothy Allison to the conference on Friday afternoon. The Glitterary Festival is a queer literary festival with a broad definition of what is literature and what is queer. It will take place on April 3-5.

Dorothy Allison describes herself as "a feminist, a working-class storyteller, a southern expatriate, a sometime poet, and a happily born-again Californian." She is the author of the novel *Bastard Out of Carolina* and the short story collection *Trash*, which won

This year the Children's Book Festival will be held March 27, the weekend before the Oxford Conference

for the Book. More than 1,200 students from Oxford and Lafayette County schools will be in attendance at the Ford Center for the Performing Arts. Oge Mora will speak to first-graders at 9:00 a.m. about her book *Thank You, Omu!* and Cassie Beasley will speak to fifth-graders at 10:30 a.m. about her book *Circus Mirandus*.



Zaire Love



Finding Vision Everywhere: Zaire Love

How can someone you've never met be an inspiration? Just ask MFA student, Zaire Love. For her, the death of a musician in California impacted her work on a personal level in Mississippi.

Rapper, entrepreneur, and activist Nipsey Hussle released his debut studio album, *Victory Lap*, in 2018 to critical acclaim and commercial success, but was

murdered outside his place of business in Los Angeles on March 31, 2019. Though Love didn't know him, his tragedy had a profound effect on her work.

"I was just strangely impacted by it, so much, and a lot of people were, and we were just, in a sense, not understanding, because we didn't know this person in close proximity, so why did we feel such

an emotional pull? But that was the catalyst of me making *The Black Men I Know* my thesis," Love said.

The idea of what she wanted was already there: to make a short film talking to black men about their struggles, wants, and desires. After Hussle died, she realized that instead of putting flowers on a loved one's grave, she wanted to metaphorically give them their flowers

now. “After Nipsey Hussle passed, we did a lot of memorializing and a lot of honoring him, and I thought, what if he got all of that love while he was here? He could’ve had an impact and made changes as a trailblazer,” Love said. “So, I guess my film is twofold: one, to show the vulnerability of black men who society might look at a certain way, and two, giving them the opportunity to be their full, authentic selves, so they can say, ‘I’m important enough to have this beautiful film made of me, and it shows all of the sides to me. It is pushing me in a light that I would love to see myself in, and now I’m going to take steps in order to get there.’”

Her thesis film, *The Black Men I Know*, follows an uncle and a nephew whose neighborhood in Memphis introduced and inducted them into violence, incarceration, and hustle. “I look at how that manifests itself as trauma and how these traumatic experiences have shaped who they are and how they interact with the world,” said Love, who earned an undergraduate degree in theatre from Spelman College and a master’s in education from Houston Baptist University.

Inspiration can come from strangers like Hussle, or from close family. For her first film, *Trees*, her grandmother plays the main role. Initially, it began very small, as Andy Harper encouraged her to enter a one-minute film competition. “I made up a song, and I told my granny about it, how she would be the tree and how the tree symbolizes black women in that there is so much majesty and so much wisdom but a lot of times we just walk past these trees not even thinking about how did they get there, how did they grow, how long are they there, and what they’ve seen and how much knowledge they have acquired just by standing and being there, being rooted in a place,” Love said. “Then, I submitted it to

Indie Grits and they gave me some money to make it into a seven-minute film and that gave me an opportunity to expand it.”

Harper says that Love came to the MFA program with stories already bursting from her imagination. “It was clear early on that what Zaire needed was for the Southern Studies faculty and staff to help her learn the foundational aspects of storytelling and cultural studies and then to get out of her way,” Harper said. “Zaire has taken full advantage of both the coursework and the practical aspects of documentary fieldwork to put herself in a position to be someone who will be a force in telling the stories of a complicated South for years to come.”

Turning strangers into family is also becoming a hallmark for Love. In the fall semester, she spent three months with the men of the Eta Beta chapter of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated. She worked with them from September to November and produced a twenty-minute documentary that debuted at the MFA showcase in December. “It’s basically about these young black men in a fraternity living in Mississippi, their brotherhood, the community in which they build and the safe spaces that they hold,” Love said. She showed the fraternity members’ interactions and formed a connection with them herself.

“Over the span of three months, and the bond that you form, now that it’s over, I feel like they’re family, and they feel that way towards me. When they posted the trailer, they tagged me in it and said I’m their favorite videographer,” Love said. “I was not expecting the relationships that we built. The respect that I have for them and they for me is just really beautiful.”

Love says that the biggest difference in working with people she’s known her whole life, and working

with people she just met is the matter of familiarity that may or may not prove to be an advantage. “With Phi Beta Sigma, I had no real expectations. It was just kind of like, okay, let’s just go there,” Love said. “Whereas with family, I had certain expectations of certain things that I thought were going to be said or how things were going to be done. And so, when it was not said or it was not done or not how I thought the conversation was going to go, it went completely differently. Then, that’s where you have to deal with reality, and that’s why *The Black Men I Know* kind of felt heavier.”

Her inquisitive nature helps her to tell all these stories. “I can just ask questions of other people. I get their answers, and it ignites things in me. I can really create from there. I don’t have to make anything up, and I think that sparks even more creativity and passion and purpose because it’s not some abstract thing. Its somebody’s real life.”

Regardless if her subject matter is close to her, or something that becomes close to her during her filmmaking, Love is someone to watch both now and in the future. “I have a vision for myself and where that will take me. I do want to be a Toni Morrison, Maya Angelou, Nina Simone-esque type of figure in the arts of everything that’s black and southern,” Love said. “So, the singer, the writer, the filmmaker, the advocate, all wrapped in one, where when you say, Zaire Love, you understand my work centers around the black South, and it has made progress and impact. Not in an essence to become famous, but to uplift where I come from, and what has made me.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Diagnosing Literature and Culture

Odie Lindsey Frames Healthcare and the Region

Medical school may not seem like the most obvious place to study the South, but Odie Lindsey takes future nurses and doctors and asks them to consider this complicated region with a medicinal spin. As the writer in residence at Vanderbilt University's Center for Medicine, Health, and Society (MHS), he teaches writing and literature to students whose academic work investigates the cultural, economic, demographic, and biological factors that impact health.

"The aim is to further develop critical and analytical skills by asking students to consider both the craft and aesthetic of writing, and to uncover and explore the cultural structures, codes, and themes within fiction, nonfiction, and poetry," Lindsey said.

He earned his MA in Southern Studies in 2007 from the University of Mississippi and an MFA in writing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. A combat veteran, his related short story collection, *We Come to Our Senses* (2016), was included on Best of 2016 lists at *Military Times* and *Electric Literature*, and his fiction and essays have appeared in *Best American Short Stories*, *Iowa Review*, *Columbia*, *Guernica*, the anthology *Forty Stories*, and elsewhere. His work examines the crosscurrents of war, gender, sexuality, and the South, and the role of the body in southern literature and culture.



Odie Lindsey

Lindsey's interdisciplinary Southern Studies training is key to this process, since he says he prefers to teach works that are ripe with social and cultural complications. "Echoing one MHS focus on the 'social determinants of health,' my students explore how different bodies in different locations are impacted by social codes and behavior, history, policy, belief—and how these things shape individual and group wellbeing," he said. "The texts we consider often echo my Southern Studies interests, such as Larry Brown's VA-set novel *Dirty Work*, Jesmyn Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, and Molly McCully Brown's *The Virginia State Colony for Epileptics and Feeble-minded*."

By bringing both fiction and nonfiction into the classroom, Lindsey puts nonfiction materials around a work of literary fiction or poetry and then builds in related, immersive exercises. "For example, if we study the impact of monuments and memorials in a novel, they'll go to the state capital and consider which bodies are represented in statue—or more importantly, which aren't—and what this says about our cultural 'body' and related values," said Lindsey, who has received a NEA-funded fellowship to the Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and a Tennessee Arts Commission fellowship in Literature. "Another example is, when reading Larry Brown's *Dirty Work*, I send students to observe at the local VA. In the case of these outings, the 'nonfiction' is supplied care of student's first-hand, written response."

This spring, he is teaching his usual course: Medicine and Literature (MHS 3050W), a writing-intensive course that focuses on literary texts (novels, poetry collections, short stories, essays), complemented by creative assignments and scholarly readings, and a special-topics course Documenting the Body, which

consists of a series of immersive outings in Nashville.

"Students read scholarly works about a particular health or cultural topic, before engaging that topic in the city itself," Lindsey said. "Subjects of study have included sustainable food and food policy, immigration and refugee communities, sites of memory and memorial, visual art representations, trans health and health policy, public transportation, veterans' health, and gentrification. After reading the scholarship and visiting relevant sites, students produce a written report that processes both and considers the larger relationship to the community."

Lindsey also utilizes the *Mississippi Encyclopedia* in his classroom, which is a seamless choice, as he was an associate editor of the volume. He employs it as a "scholarly springboard." "Specifically, I asked students to explore topics that inform or influence Brad Watson and Jesmyn Ward's novels—both of which are set in Mississippi—even if those topics aren't the focus of the story," he said. "Most recently, when teaching *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, these subjects ranged from Parchman Farm (a major presence in the story), to Pine forests (a relative glance). *Mississippi Encyclopedia* articles such as 'Folk Medicine,' 'Black Codes,' 'Law,' and 'Voodoo' and, of course, 'Medicine' were among the many that students used as a prompt for further research, boosting their insight into Ward's novel."

The foundation of Lindsey's teaching is his writing. He had the idea for his story collection *We Come to Our Senses* during his MA thesis research, and just as the *Mississippi Encyclopedia* is the comprehensive whole of many individual parts, he wants every sentence to contribute to the comprehensive whole of a story. "My forthcoming novel, *Some Go Home*, couldn't exist without my work on the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*,"

Lindsey said. "The latter did as a volume what I strive to do in fiction: attend to both the stand-alone topic, and the larger, structural scope."

Lindsey says he revels in the push and pull of contention, of complication, when it comes to considering the South, since the vast majority of his students come from beyond the region. "The class challenges students to reconsider and reevaluate the region, and their assumptions, with a focus on the southern 'body'—a term that can apply to individuals, clinical conditions, policies, or ethics, whether local or global," he said. "I take heart in the larger purpose of the course: to aid their development as caregivers by asking them to suspend what they *think* they know, and to instead be thoughtful in questioning the how, when, and why of their beliefs. Of course, as is qualified for a healthcare frame, I sub out 'question' with 'diagnose.' In my classes, we diagnose literature and culture."

The biggest gift his students give him is the work they produce. He challenges them to bring their healthcare-based specializations to bear on literary texts, and the results are inspiring. "I think of the student who linked Toni Morrison's 1940s-set *The Bluest Eye* to a 2017 peer-reviewed clinical study in order to illustrate the pervasiveness of race-based pain stereotypes held by medical students," Lindsey said. "Or, there was the student who considered the impact of bodily trauma, PTSD, and historical trauma in Larry Brown's *Dirty Work*. They've considered female bodily autonomy and mental healthcare in the short fiction of Gayl Jones, the neurological basis of empathy in the poems of John Stone. You won't find much of this stuff in literary journals or reviews. Don't tell my students, but they're teaching me."

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

Living Blues Celebrates Its Fiftieth Year of Publication

For half a century, America's oldest and most respected blues magazine has conducted an ongoing oral history project of the blues, documenting a dynamic musical and cultural tradition that continues to thrive today.

During the 1960s and '70s, blues music was enjoying a resurgence of popularity in the United States and abroad. Yet, at the time there was no domestic print publication that focused specifically on the genre and the musicians creating it. In 1970 a group of seven young blues enthusiasts—Diane Allmen, Paul Garon, Bruce Iglauer, Jim O'Neal, André Souffront, Amy van Singel, and Tim Zorn—gathered at Iglauer's apartment in Chicago to discuss creating a magazine that focused on the vibrant local music scene. Having connected through Bob Koester's Jazz Record Mart and Delmark Records, they wanted to fill this void in music journalism. In Peter Guralnick's foreword to *The Voice of the Blues: Classic*

Interviews from Living Blues Magazine, O'Neal recalled, "At one of our first meetings, Bruce said, 'Well, we'll all do this for about five years, and by that time everybody will have read the magazine and learned everything they'll need to know about



the blues, and that'll be it." With some seed money from Koester, they proceeded to put the magazine together. They knew nothing of periodical production and had little but their own enthusiasm to go on.

Living Blues vol. 1, no. 1—on the cover of this issue of the *Southern Register*—was published in the spring of that year, with Howlin' Wolf as the first cover artist. The issue included a first-person interview with the seminal blues musician, as well as a





section of blues-related news items and album reviews—items that quickly became the strengths of the magazine.

By 1971 O’Neal and van Singel had become the sole owners and publishers of *Living Blues*. Though largely Chicago oriented throughout its first decade, the magazine soon expanded its scope to include other locales such as Mississippi, California, and Texas. Extended interviews with legendary artists such as Bobby “Blue” Bland and Jimmy Reed, alongside lesser-known musicians like Esther Phillips and Houston Stackhouse, offered insights into their lives and times, and provided a greater understanding of the expansiveness and depth of African American blues culture.



In 1983 *Living Blues* relocated from Chicago to Mississippi. O’Neal and van Singel transferred the rights to the University of Mississippi in Oxford, where it has been published ever since by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. Peter Lee joined the magazine as editor in 1987, where he remained until 1992. David Nelson assumed the editorship in 1992, followed by Scott Barretta in 1999 and current editor Brett J. Bonner in 2002. To date, *Living Blues* has published more than 260 issues, nearly 2,500 articles and stories, and over 11,000 reviews, with all of its content supplied by a network of freelance writers and photographers. What began as a black-and-white typeset

and Xeroxed magazine assembled in a basement and sold out of the trunks of cars has expanded to a four-color, perfect-bound publication printed by the world’s largest printer and sold on newsstands around the world.

Living Blues continues to provide detailed coverage across the spectrum of the blues world. Over the last three decades, special issues have highlighted blues-based and blues-adjacent genres like zydeco, Hill Country blues, soul blues, and sacred steel. The magazine has also documented flourishing local scenes in cities such as Houston, New York, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Birmingham, Alabama, and Jackson, Mississippi. The Hurricane Katrina special issue

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 The term North Mississippi Hill Country...
 Cedric Burnside
 David and Junior Kimbrough play together at Junior's juke joint, August 1992.
 R.L. and Deweyese Burnside play together at Junior Kimbrough's juke joint in August of 1992.
 David and Junior Kimbrough
 Cedric Burnside

revealed the horrors and aftermath of the storm through the eyes of the musicians who survived it, and the Blues and Protest issue detailed how blues artists use music to call attention to social injustices. Besides extensive feature articles, album, book, and film reviews, and the latest Blues News briefs, other regular features include Deitra Farr's Artist to Artist interview series, Breaking Out stories on under-the-radar performers whose careers are on the rise, and the industry's only Radio Charts, compiled by Jim McGrath and featuring the top tracks from blues radio playlists worldwide.

Living Blues hosted the first Blues Today: A *Living Blues* Symposium at the University of Mississippi in 2003 and has presented the event several

times in the years since. In acknowledgment of the contributions *Living Blues* has made to blues documentation and scholarship, the magazine received the Keeping the Blues Alive Award from the Blues Foundation in 1993 and a Mississippi Blues Trail marker from the state of Mississippi in 2009.

Current editor Brett Bonner observes, "After nearly a hundred years of recorded legacy and fifty years of *Living Blues*, the blues is still a vibrant, powerful, passionate musical form whose influence can be found in virtually all forms of popular music. From rock to pop, country to rap, the roots of the blues run deep and wide. But to those of us at *LB* it's more than simply the

music—it's the people and the characters that drive us to do what we do." It's what *Living Blues* was founded on, and it remains the same today. Ever focused on a vital, evolving artistic culture, *Living Blues* looks forward to documenting the next fifty years of the blues.

Living Blues will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary throughout 2020, with special events and the official anniversary issue scheduled for April/May. To subscribe to *Living Blues*, which *All Music Guide* calls "absolutely the best blues publication available, and in fact one of the best specialized music magazines of any kind," visit www.livingblues.com.

Melanie Young

OUTRAGE CHANNIELED IN VERSE
 "BIG BROT" said Pete Seeger. Protest songs? That's about as far as it goes. The tendency of sacred and the city, identification to overcome religious and a general to freedom...
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New Oral History Project Documents African American History in Yalobusha County

During the fall semester, five students in SST 560, Oral History of Southern Social Movements (taught by me), collaborated with Dottie Chapman Reed to develop the Black Families of Yalobusha County Oral History Project. Reed, who lives in Atlanta, is a member of the UM Class of '74, grew up in Water Valley, and writes the column "Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha County" for the *North Mississippi Herald*.

The students—Colton Babbitt, Michelle Bright, Brittany Brown, Keon Burns, and Rhondalyn Peairs—conducted original research and recorded first-person accounts with eight narrators, all of whom grew up in and have strong family ties to Yalobusha County: Lillie Roberts, Emma Faye Gooch, Dorothy Kee, Marjorie Moore, Katherine Roland Pollard, Luther Folsom Jr., Luther Folsom Sr., and James Wright. Their goal was to create a permanent record to contribute to an understanding of African American history in North Mississippi.

The interviews offer rich descriptions of life for Black people in Yalobusha County from the early twentieth century to the present, documenting how African Americans attained land, built institutions such as churches and schools, asserted the right to vote, and joined civil rights protests for dignity and equality. The narrators tell more intimate stories, too, about the meaning of family in their lives, their faith traditions, and their relationship to place. Each of their interviews and accompanying documents will be preserved in the institutional



KEVIN COZART

Narrators with interviewers at the oral history program on December 7: (front row, from left) Dorothy Kee, Lillie Roberts, Marjorie Moore and Katherine Pollard; (back row, from left) Colton Babbitt, Keon Burns, Brittany Brown, Emma Gooch, Dottie Reed, Rhondalyn Peairs, Michelle Bright, Luther Folsom Jr. and Jessie Wilkerson.

repository at the University of Mississippi and will be made available to the public.

Upon completing interviews, students listened to one another's recordings and, after hours of discussion, created a multi-vocal, multilayered history. They presented that collective narrative, "All Our Names Were Freedom": Agency, Resiliency, and Community in Yalobusha County," in a staged reading on December 7, 2019, at Spring Hill M.B. Church North before an audience of approximately seventy community members, UM faculty and students, and six of the interviewees.

The event and larger project have been supported by the Center for the Study of Southern

Culture, the Arch Dalrymple III Department of History, and the UM Diversity Incentive Fund. With the support of a \$3,000 donation from the Sylarn Foundation (based in Michigan), we will be able to continue collecting interviews in the spring semester.

On February 19, 2020, students will be joined by Dottie Reed for a second performance of "All Our Names Were Freedom" as part of the Center's SouthTalks series and in conjunction with the Sarah Isom Center's Women and Civic Engagement Summit. The event will be held at 5:30 p.m. in the Tupelo Room in Barnard Observatory and is free and open to the public.

Jessie Wilkerson

Music, Mythology, Race, and Images of the South

Spring Courses Offer Something for Everyone

Changes to the Southern Studies curriculum made in Fall 2019 are coming to the classroom this semester. For the first time this spring, SST 103: Southern Mythologies and Popular Culture and SST 108: Music and Southern Society are on the schedule.

Brian Foster, assistant professor of sociology and Southern Studies, and Darren Grem, associate professor of history and Southern Studies, are team-teaching the SST 108 course, which highlights the riddles and paradoxes of the South. They aim to interrogate the people and history of the South through a critical reading of the region's protest culture(s)—Nina Simone's "Mississippi Goddam," Merle Haggard's "I'm Just a White Boy," Beyonce's "Formation," and others.

"Today, millions around the world enjoy music born and bred in the American South, and this course will examine the major genres of southern music, proceeding quasi-chronologically from the antebellum era to the late twentieth century,"



Jodi Skipper

KEVIN BAIN

said Grem, who is also the undergraduate student advisor. "A playlist consisting of a hundred songs will serve as the course's main texts. At home and in class, students will use the playlist's musical and lyrical contents to understand how specific songs, artists, records, and performances fit into or reaffirm—or

challenge or even change—the racial, gendered, and economic arrangements of the South and broader nation and world."

The course considers perspectives from a variety of disciplines and examines a range of texts, from scholarly essays to popular culture. "We will also seek to understand the visual, commercial, social, and political cultures of southern music, examining how musical artists continue to draw lines around what is "southern," who or what counts as "southern," and who wins and loses from the making of "southern" music today," Grem said.

Adam Gussow, professor of English and Southern Studies, will introduce SST 103 students to three familiar versions of the mythic South—the pastoral South, the benighted South, and the plantation South—that have shaped both native and outsider perceptions of the region for several centuries, exploring and critiquing them through a range of popular



Brian Foster

ROBERT JORDAN

Ralph Eubanks



ROBERT JORDAN

investments, including literature, musical recordings, music videos, and film.

“We will also investigate two related clusters of imagery and ideology: the South-as-western, with *Smokey and the Bandit*, ‘Old Town Road,’ and ‘I Play Chicken with the Train,’ and the ‘blues’ South, with Robert Johnson selling his soul to the devil at the cross-roads,” Gussow said.

One goal he has for the course, achieved in part by juxtaposing the idealizations and de-idealizations of southern myth with the stubborn facts of southern history, will be a deeper kind of seeing and hearing. Authors, performers, texts, and themes covered in class will include “Sweet Southern Comfort,” *Roots*, Elliott Gorn on rough and tumble fighting, *Forrest Gump*, Rissi Palmer and African American investments in country music, *Tucker and Dale vs. Evil*, “Southern Comfort Zone,” *Mandingo*, *Swallow Barn*, and “Kickin’ Up Mud.”

For only the second time, Jodi Skipper, associate professor of anthropology and Southern Studies will teach SST 104: The South and Race, which examines historical and contemporary dimensions of racial and ethnic relations in the US South. The course begins from an anthropological perspective, by examining how the idea of race

has developed in the field through human variation and adaptation in the US, and then changed historically over place and time.

“For the latter, I’ve assigned a sociology text to introduce students to how ‘white’ came to be legally defined in colonial America, how other groups of people were framed in relation to that, and how the US South, especially around southern segregation, led to legal definitions of ‘black,’” Skipper said. “We also look at some of the major debates that have dominated the study of race and ethnicity in the US, and how that’s impacted and been impacted by southerners like Zora Neale Hurston and Ida B. Wells-Barnett.”

The class also addresses the topics of slavery, Native Removal, Mexican immigration and the creation of Tejanos, colorism, the eugenics movement, and genetic genealogies. Skipper, who only taught this course for the first time in fall 2019, said students were engaged with the topic, which was facilitated by several group exercises. “My goal was to disorient their preconceived notions of race, to help them think about how people become ‘races’ before getting into the impacts of race,” she said. “It’s admittedly a lot to pack into a class but, I think, it’s caused students to think more critically about the power of categories. That was part of my hope. I

think that students see racism as a problem, but race is the root of the problem, and those two can’t be separated.”

As usual, a SST 598 Special Topics class is set for spring, this time taught by Ralph Eubanks, visiting professor of English and Southern Studies. *The Image of the American South and Beyond* examines the American South through the visual art of photography and its linkage with literature, as well as how the image of the American South—as captured through the lens of Walker Evans and the prose of James Agee—has had an impact more broadly on literature. Susan Sontag’s *On Photography* and James Agee and Walker Evans’s *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* serve as a foundational works.

“My inspiration for the course derives from my years of working in the Farm Security Administration photography archive at the Library of Congress,” Eubanks said. “What I learned from the FSA archive is that while photography is a way of seeing, it is also an artform that has an impact on how writers create imagery with words. As Dorothea Lange said, ‘the camera is an instrument that teaches people how to see without a camera.’”

Eubanks uses the visual record of the American South, including novels, nonfiction narrative, and journalism, particularly magazine journalism of the 1960s in illustrated magazines such as *Life* and *Look*. “The American South is one of the most documented regions photographically, largely because of the work of the FSA,” Eubanks said. “Those images provide a grammar for how we see the South. While remnants of the Depression-era South linger, the image of the region has evolved over time. And that is what we study in my special topics class: how the image of the South has changed and is continuing to change.”

Rebecca Lauck Cleary

“The March Against Fear”

The March Against Fear, also known as the Meredith March, coursed from Memphis, Tennessee, to Jackson, Mississippi, in June of 1966. The trek began as the solo endeavor of James Meredith, but it was ultimately taken up by major civil rights organizations, activists from around the country, and thousands of black Mississippians. The March Against Fear is most famous for Stokely Carmichael’s unveiling of the slogan “Black Power.” This demonstration showcased an important transition in the national civil rights movement. It further highlighted the triumphs and tensions of black politics in Mississippi.

James Meredith had achieved international prominence for his courage while integrating the University of Mississippi in 1962. In 1966 he was a student at Columbia Law School in New York City. On June 5 he started walking south down Highway 51 from the Peabody Hotel in downtown Memphis. He stated two goals: to encourage black voter registration and to challenge white intimidation. A quirky individualist with a belief in his own divine destiny, Meredith also hoped that his walk would kickstart a run for political office in Mississippi.

The next day, just south of Hernando, a white man named Aubrey Norvell emerged from a gully and fired his shotgun three times. He wounded Meredith with bird shot pellets in the back, neck, and shoulder. The shooting spurred an outcry. A photograph of the writhing Meredith appeared on the front page of newspapers around the country. Politicians expressed their outrage. Among others, Martin Luther King of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) vowed to continue Meredith’s march. A single man’s walk had become a massive civil rights demonstration.

Of course, online encyclopedia don’t have “pages” in the traditional sense of the term, but since 2018 we have been adding entries to the online version of the Mississippi Encyclopedia. Here’s our latest addition, “The March Against Fear,” by University of Memphis history professor Aram Goudsouzian. You can find it and other scholarly work about life in the state, past and present, online by going to www.mississippiencyclopedia.org.



The June 26, 1966, March Against Fear rally at the Mississippi state capitol, with Martin Luther King Jr. speaking and James Meredith sitting before the podium (right).

By June 7 major civil rights leaders had congregated in Memphis. In mass meetings at churches and in closed-door discussions at the Lorraine Motel, they debated about the nature of the march. Roy Wilkins of the NAACP and Whitney Young of the National Urban League sought a racially integrated and nonviolent march that would serve as a lobbying tool for the Civil Rights Bill of 1966. But leaders of the more militant, grassroots organizations—such as Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Floyd McKissick of the Congress of Racial

Equality (CORE)—wanted a march with a focus on black voter registrations and a strong black identity, as well as armed protection from the Deacons for Defense and Justice. The NAACP and Urban League withdrew from official participation, leaving King and SCLC as the key moderating force.

Over the next three weeks, the march moved through Mississippi. Despite the logistical challenges of a traveling mass protest, African Americans kept staking claims to citizenship. The activists staged voter registration rallies outside courthouses. In Batesville, the new

BOB FITCH PHOTOGRAPHY ARCHIVE [M1994, MEREDITH 092], STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES.

registrants included El Fondren, a 106-year-old man who had been born a slave. In Grenada, a town notorious for violent racial intimidation, the marchers rallied around the statue of a Confederate soldier, brandishing their defiance of white supremacy. They registered hundreds of voters and launched a local freedom movement.

The march's sponsors included Mississippi organizations such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Delta Ministry, and the Madison County Project. Prominent figures of the Mississippi movement—including Fannie Lou Hamer, Charles Evers, Flonzie Goodloe, and Lawrence Guyot—played crucial organizing roles.

Departing from Meredith's path down Highway 51, the march detoured into the Mississippi Delta. On June 16, it reached Greenwood, where SNCC had a long history of grassroots organizing. Carmichael provoked his own arrest while trying to erect the march's tents near a black elementary school. When he emerged from jail, a rally was occurring in Broad Street Park, in the heart of Greenwood's black district. SNCC organizers, such as Willie Ricks, had primed the crowd. When Carmichael asked, "What do we want?," the audience yelled back, "Black Power!"

"Black Power" quickly emerged as a point of national debate. The mainstream press interpreted the slogan as violent and vengeful, while to many African Americans the phrase conveyed desires for black political autonomy, cultural pride, and the right to self-defense. On the march, activists launched competing chants of "Freedom Now" and "Black Power." Martin Luther King did not use the slogan, which he considered a repudiation of nonviolence and racial brotherhood. Still, he worked in creative tension with activists such as Carmichael. Whatever their political distinctions, they shared the larger goals of black freedom.

Throughout Mississippi, whites heckled the marchers and brandished Confederate flags. During the final week, on June 22, a mob of local whites attacked the contingent of marchers who took a side trip to Philadelphia, Mississippi, to observe the second anniversary of the murders of three civil rights workers. Two days later, the marchers planted their tents on the grounds of another black school, this time in Canton. The Mississippi Highway Patrol attacked them with tear gas and rifle butts. In the grotesque aftermath, dozens of people required medical attention, while the militancy of frustrated activists intensified.

The March Against Fear ended on June 26 with the largest civil rights demonstration in Mississippi history, as fifteen thousand people marched through Jackson and congregated at the Capitol. A weakened James Meredith won the loudest cheers. The march had evolved in ways that Meredith never imagined or desired, but it accomplished his stated goals. Over four thousand African Americans along the route registered to vote, while many more defied white supremacy by joining the march. This final great march of the civil rights movement had christened the slogan of Black Power. To many black Mississippians, it was also a moment of inspiration.

Aram Goudsouzian
University of Memphis

For Further Reading:

Taylor Branch, *At Canaan's Edge: America in the King Years, 1965–1968* (2006); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (1995); Aram Goudsouzian, *Down to the Crossroads: Civil Rights, Black Power, and the Meredith March Against Fear* (2014); Peniel Joseph, *Waiting 'Til the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (2006).

Eudora Welty Awards

Each year the Center for the Study of Southern Culture presents the Eudora Welty Awards in Creative Writing to



Mississippi high school students during the annual Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference. Established and endowed by the late Frances Patterson of Tupelo, the awards are given for creative writing in either prose or poem form.

Students must be Mississippi residents. The competition is open to ninth through twelfth graders, and writing should be submitted through students' high schools. Short stories should not exceed three thousand words, and poetry should not exceed one hundred lines. Winning students will be notified at least a month prior to award presentation. The first-place prize is \$500, and the second-place prize is \$250. The winners will also be recognized at the opening of the 2020 Faulkner & Yoknapatawpha Conference on the University of Mississippi campus in Oxford on July 19.

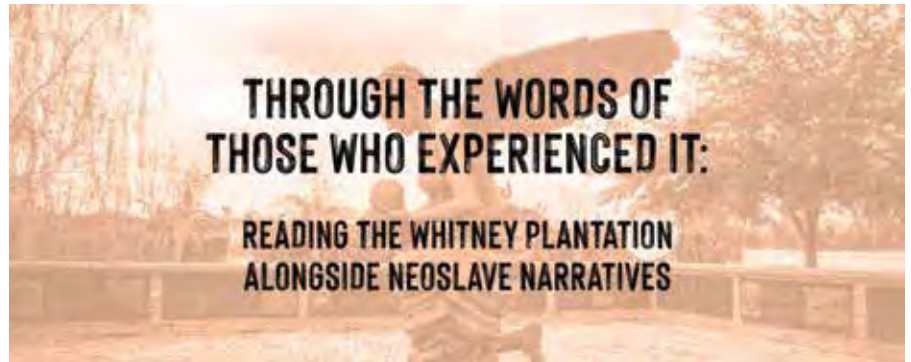
Each entry should be accompanied by the entry form and post-marked by May 15, 2020. Faculty and staff from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture will judge the entries and select the winners. Application and submission requirements will be sent to all Mississippi public and private schools. If you know a Mississippi student currently enrolled in high school outside of the state or who is homeschooled, please e-mail rebeccac@olemiss.edu or call 662-915-3369 for a copy. To see a list of past winners or to download the application, visit <http://southernstudies.olemiss.edu/academics/high-school-eudora-welty-awards/>.

Study the South Publishes Two New Essays

Representations of Slavery and Southern Hospitality Subjects of New Work in Center Journal

On November 20, *Study the South* published a new essay by Sarah Payne, a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Digital Liberal Arts at Middlebury College.

Recent representations of slavery have provoked discussions about who should represent black pain and oppression and what purpose such representations serve. The tour of Whitney Plantation, which opened in 2014 in Wallace, Louisiana, stands out



as the only plantation tour in the US dedicated to depicting the antebellum South entirely from the perspective of former slaves. Using examples from well-known novels such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, Sarah Payne demonstrates how the Whitney, like these textual narratives of slavery, employs bodily epistemology, sentimentalism, a white authenticating presence, and a focus on authenticity, making neoslave narratives useful lenses through which to read the immersive experience of the Whitney's unique plantation tour.

Payne earned her PhD in English literature from Northeastern University. Her dissertation analyzes

the refusal of racial identity in twentieth-century women's writing, focusing on Harlem, the US South, and the Caribbean. Her research interests include southern literature, gender and sexuality, and digital humanities.

On December 20, *Study the South* published a new essay by Betsie Garner, an assistant professor of sociology at Tennessee Tech University.

The image of a warm and welcoming South is often summoned as a moral calling, a sacred duty to bridge differences by treating others hospitably. Southern regional identity is positioned as having equal importance to that of Christian religious identity, hinging on devotion

to Christian teachings just as well as reverence for southern tradition. In this new *Study the South* essay, Betsie Garner argues that a mutuality characterizes the relationship between southern hospitality and Christian hospitality. The image of a gracious southern hostess shares a certain coherence with that of a neighborly Christian, and the notion of hospitality resonates with both regional and religious dimensions of identity for many Christians in the South.

Garner received a PhD in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania in 2017, an MA in sociology from the University of Pennsylvania in 2013, and a BA in sociology from Emory University in 2011. Her research on topics related to family, culture, and place analyzes how inequality is created and maintained through routine social interaction in people's daily lives. Additional work on the present topic has appeared in *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* and *Sociology Compass*.

Visit www.studythesouth.com to read Payne's and Garner's essays, as well as other essays in the journal.

CALL FOR PROPOSAL

Announcing the *Study the South* Research Fellowship at the University of Mississippi

Scholars researching the South now have an opportunity for funded research in the collections of the Department of Archives and Special Collections at the J. D. Williams Library at the University of Mississippi. The *Study the South* research fellowship, sponsored by the Center for the Study of Southern Culture and the Department of Archives and Special Collections, will provide funding of \$1,500 to one qualified scholar, who will also have access to a carrel in the library and an opportunity to publish an essay in *Study the South* based on their research.

Special Collections has particular strengths in areas that include political history, the blues, civil rights, and the antebellum and Civil War eras. Subject guides and finding aids at Archives and Special Collections can be found at www.libraries.olemiss.edu/specialcollectionspages.

The funds will support travel and lodging expenses, and the remainder serves as a stipend. Research should take place between June 2020 and May 2021. The deadline for application is March 30, 2020, and the selection committee will notify the awardee by May 1.

Study the South is an online scholarly journal at the Center for the Study of Southern Culture. We will ask the successful fellow either to give a public presentation at the Center or a short, recorded interview about her or his work, to be shared through *Study the South*, www.studythesouth.com.

All scholars, including advanced graduate students, are eligible for the fellowship. Candidates should send a 1–2 page description of a research agenda, citing research questions and specific collections that seem most useful, to James G. Thomas, Jr., editor of *Study the South*, at jgthomas@olemiss.edu.



University Commemorates Racial Injustice on Campus with Two-Day Event

On February 24 and 25, the University of Mississippi will commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the protests and mass arrests of black students that took place on campus on February 25, 1970. Black Power at Ole Miss: Remembrance, Reckoning, and Repair at Fifty Years will remember and honor the activism and sacrifice of student activists,



reckon with the harm and trauma caused by the actions of the university and law enforcement, and seek reparative solutions grounded in truth-telling and justice. This event is organized by the Arch Dalrymple III Department of History, with support from the Center for the Study of Southern Culture, the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, and the Office of the Provost.

Black Power at Ole Miss will begin February 24 in Fulton Chapel, the site of the main arrest, by screening the short documentary film, *Black Power at Ole Miss*, featuring former student activists interviewed as part of the Parchman Oral History Project during the summer of 2019. The event will also feature a theatrical reading of the hearings of the eight students who were eventually expelled from the university, produced by theater arts professor Peter Wood, featuring current students as well as former students playing themselves. The evening will close with a panel discussion and talkback moderated by visiting professor of Southern Studies, English, and honors Ralph Eubanks.

The second day will feature a luncheon from noon to 2:00 p.m. with current University of Mississippi students, sponsored by the Black Student Union, Black Alumni Association, the Department of African American Studies, and the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement. It will be followed by a commemorative ceremony at the site of the chapel arrest at 3:00 p.m. Dr. Yusef Salaam, one of the exonerated Central Park Five, will close with the Black History Month keynote address at the Student Union Ballroom.

Please direct any questions to the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement at 662-915-2933.

READING THE SOUTH

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

Mississippi Witness: The Photographs of Florence Mars

Edited by Elaine Owens.
Introduction by James T.
Campbell. Photographs by
Florence Mars. Jackson:
University Press of
Mississippi, 2019. 134 pages.
\$40.00 cloth.

Florence Mars (1923–2006) was born, raised, and lived most of her adult life in Philadelphia, Mississippi. In some ways, however, she did not seem a woman of that time or place. The granddaughter of one of the town's founders—a merchant who prospered by “furnishing” local farmers in the spring and foreclosing upon those who couldn't pay him back after harvest—she and her family were solidly members of Neshoba County's ruling elite. Despite this position of privilege, she actively opposed the white community's perniciously orthodox attitudes regarding matters of race.

As with many parts of Mississippi in the 1960s, Neshoba County was violently racist. Most members of local law enforcement belonged to the Ku Klux Klan and were not shy about using the power of the billy club (or worse) to prevent African Americans from making social, economic, or legal progress. Infamously, during 1964's “Freedom Summer,” three civil rights workers disappeared in Neshoba County. Their bodies were found several weeks later in a remote rural area. This event brought with it the spotlight of national attention, both from the news media and the FBI.



Most local people seemed to understand that the Klan had murdered the civil rights workers, but county and town officials advanced an account that claimed their disappearance to be a hoax promoted by the civil rights movement to defame Neshoba County. Florence Mars knew that narrative to be a lie and, along with a very few other members of the white community, loudly opposed it. She also cooperated with the FBI investigation of the murders. Such defiance of community norms came at a cost, both socially and economically. Not only was she publicly shunned, but she also saw her livestock auction business boycotted, which eventually forced her to shut it down.

Today, Mars is best known as the author of *Witness in Philadelphia*, her 1977 account of the civil rights murders and the community's denial of responsibility for them. *Mississippi Witness: The Photographs of Florence Mars*, newly published by the University Press of Mississippi, deepens our understanding of the photographer and, more importantly, provides visual context for one of the civil rights movement's

most horrific episodes. Mars's most active period as a photographer (and the time frame for nearly all the images in the book) was the decade leading up to 1965. During that time she photographed in and around Philadelphia, focusing on general town scenes, small bits of daily life, and portraiture, primarily of African Americans.

Except to show what Philadelphia, Mississippi, looked like in the middle of the twentieth century,

her town-scene and daily-life photographs are unexceptional. Some are from too far away; others lack a sense of moment or narrative. The many portraits she made, however, are more striking and provide considerable food for thought. Her several best are from close range and concentrate on such qualities as clothing, body language, and facial expression at the expense of physical setting. The portrait on page 71 (also the photograph on the book's cover) is a case in point. A middle-aged African American woman, dressed in a domestic worker's white uniform, stares out at us. Her facial expression is a difficult-to-read mixture of pride, anger, fear, and desperation. She does not look directly into the camera; instead, her eyes seem focused on a distant point somewhere above and beyond the photographer. She doesn't seem happy about having her picture made.

Only two of the book's fifty-four portraits are of white adults (one of them being a civil rights activist). A few more are of members of Neshoba County's Choctaw community. The rest are of African Americans—men, women, and children—sometimes

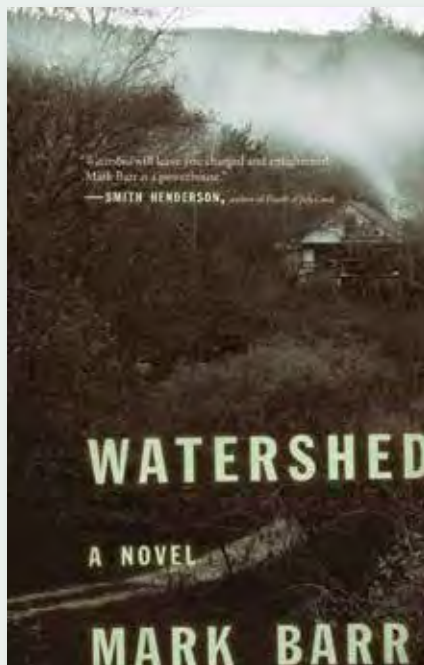
in groups, sometimes individually. Facial expressions in these portraits vary widely, but some can be read as masking deeper feelings. On page 33, an older woman seems put out, perhaps impatient about having to stop what she's doing to pose for a picture. A pair of teenage girls cling nervously to one another on page 42, their faces uncertain and distrustful. On page 87, three men seated on a bench in front of a store display what looks to be barely concealed ill will toward the photographer. Several of Mars's portraits of black children show kids who seem frightened, sullen, even angry. This should not, of course, be surprising. In mid-twentieth-century Philadelphia, Mississippi, very few African Americans would dare refuse a white photographer permission to make their picture. It would not matter who the photographer was, how polite or sympathetic s/he seemed, or the reason for the picture; refusal would simply be too dangerous. A person would be wiser to pretend not to mind. As with photography, African American lives in that place and time were often dependent on appearances, despite the fact that many of the harsh realities of Jim Crow were all but impossible to hide. Not even a compassionate Florence Mars could change that fact.

David Wharton

Watershed

By Mark Barr. Spartanburg, SC: Hub City Press, 2019. 264 pages. \$26.00 cloth.

Labeled a "great experiment" by Pres. Franklin Roosevelt, the 1933 Tennessee Valley Authority Act created a government corporation tasked with redefining the Tennessee Valley watershed. Binding seven states, the TVA became the nation's largest supplier of electricity, promoted flood control and



reforestation, and served as a labor-generating counterstrike to the Great Depression—and, in the process, transformed a region and way of life.

How to frame such tectonics as compelling fiction? Mark Barr's debut novel, *Watershed*, does so by considering the early TVA era from the ground up, focusing on character and place, and the intimate stories of lives impacted by the agency.

Set in Hardin County, in 1937, *Watershed* is about a small community impacted by the construction of a hydroelectric dam. At the center of the novel are Claire, a local woman whose flight from an unfaithful husband leaves her life in flux, and Nathan, a hired-on electrical engineer, new to town and desperate for work, who must stay one step ahead of a murky past. These two are introduced at the boarding house owned by Claire's aunt, where their fellow residents are TVA workers, on site for only the duration of the project. They all take meals together, work and live side by side, and run up against each other's ambitions, and shortcomings, and secrets.

Given Nathan and Claire's centrality, we might expect the novel to pursue their love story. Yet Barr's treatment of his subjects is more complicated, compelling. For one

thing, Claire becomes romantic not with Nathan but with Hull, a charismatic, Chicago-based businessman, in town to sign local customers up for TVA power. What's more, Claire finds work as Hull's assistant, helping him promote electric utility to her rural neighbors, who are more apt to trust a local.

In a sense, just as Hardin County moves toward the new and unknown, Claire will be challenged to redefine herself. Having walked out on her marriage, she is subjected to judgment, gossip, and even her mother's insistence that she reunite with her cheating husband. Of course, her economic and professional well-being is inextricable from Hull, whose job seniority casts an uneasy light on their relationship. Still, the more Claire tiptoes towards self-footing, the more she's moved by the goal of not being anybody's second. While the men in her orbit puff up to fight for her—or rather, their—honor, Claire must determine how to break free of such constraints.

Nathan, too, is in search of a new beginning. Working day in and out, trying to stay off public radar while still making his name at the jobsite, he reveals snippets of the life he left behind in Memphis, including his liability for a tragic utility accident. Like many of his cohort, Nathan now aims to secure not only a permanent job, but "the kind of work that means something." As he comes to have feelings for Claire and forms relationships with the townspeople, Nathan begins to contemplate settling down in Hardin County. To do so, however, he'll have to bury his backstory, even outrunning the law-enforcing Pinkerton agents, whose presence in town further threatens his plans.

Complementing the Claire-Hull-Nathan tension, *Watershed* weaves in secondary twists and textures, including war profiteer-like business dealings for raw materials and tension between outsider hires and townies. Throughout, Barr's language is rich and descriptive. In one early passage, Nathan overlooks the river

valley expanse: “[The men were a] thousand fretting specks coursing over the site. Ten thousand spires of rebar thrust up from the dam, their lower ends buried in concrete casings that were sunk to the bedrock.” Barr also showcases a crisp knowledge of the subject matter, from circuit schematics, to dam coffer construction, to the preferred make of overalls (which is Pointer Brand, of Bristol, Tennessee, of course).

Watershed also highlights some of the early controversy surrounding the government initiative. Though the TVA is now a long-established fixture of the southeastern landscape, as the novel follows Hull, Claire, and the others who travel Hardin County, we are reminded that progress often breeds fear and suspicion: in this case, of the further mechanization of the manual, agrarian South and of the federal government that delivered it. Who knew what might happen once the lights came on?

The project detail and period cultural themes serve as the contour of *Watershed*, but it is the personal stories and relationships that keep the novel rushing forward.

Odie Lindsey

This review was first published in Chapter16.org.

Food Fights: How History Matters to Contemporary Food Debates

Edited by Charles C. Ludington and Matthew Morse Booker. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019. 304 pages, \$90.00 cloth, \$32.95 paper, \$25.99 ebook.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, food studies has matured



as a multidisciplinary academic field that merges and juxtaposes methodological and theoretical approaches to study, analyze, and critique various elements of past and contemporary food systems and related social movements. This maturation is evident in growing numbers of food studies programs at US and international universities (the Association for the Study of Food and Society lists forty-five such programs on its website); this growing list doesn't account for the food-related courses on offer on nearly every college and university campus (the Center for the Study of Southern Culture offers two courses on Southern Foodways, for example). Another demonstration of the growing prominence of food studies: it is nearly impossible to keep up with all the edited volumes and readers published in the past twenty years that purport to present an inter- or multidisciplinary examination of the role of food in society. So, do we need another one?

Ludington and Booker's recent volume argues yes, we do, because "none of the currently available books emphasize the historical background and continuity of contemporary popular debates surrounding food." (I don't completely agree. Even Sydney Mintz's (1986) *Sweetness and Power*, among the earliest and

most influential books in the fledgling field of food studies, recognized, indeed *emphasized* the historical context of the contemporary food system's rootedness in capitalist and colonialist structures. In fact, of course, all good books about food and related social movements are properly situated within historical, geographic, and other relevant contexts.) What *Food Fights* does differently, though, is to use historic context explicitly to offer commentary about contemporary food movements and their values, often in contradictory and surprising ways.

There are a lot of contemporary popular debates surrounding food; understandably, the book can't cover all of them. Those chosen are, naturally, a reflection of contributing authors' expertise and the priorities of the editors. Because the book is the outcome of a 2012 conference organized by the editors at North Carolina State University, it has the feel of an actual conversation, with authors engaging thoughtfully (sometimes contentiously) with one another's ideas.

Following the editors' introduction, the book is divided into five sections, each corresponding with a "contemporary popular debate" and articulated through a debate among the authors themselves. "Producing Food" takes up questions of industrial (conventional) agriculture, its opposition to the agrarian ideal, and the animation of that debate in modern consumer-driven food "activism." "Choosing Food" wades into debates about "taste" and its referent to social class, and argues that modern notions of "good" eating are heavily influenced by elite tastes and proclivities. "Regulating Food" considers who should be responsible for food safety in the United States, the evolving role of the USDA, and often contradictory public perceptions of food policy. In "Gendering Food," one chapter examines the emergence of baby food as a commodity and how shifting perceptions about what is "best for baby" reflect complicated idealizations of motherhood and femininity. The

second chapter argues for a renewed focus on women's history in studies of food politics. Finally, "Cooking and Eating Food" is the most theoretical section, with authors drawing on classical philosophy to argue either for culinary luddism, argued by Ken Albala ("cooking is central to what it means to be human") or culinary modernism. Rachel Laudan's plea for culinary modernism, originally published in 2001 and presented here with a new postscript, is the most quotable chapter. For example, "no amount of nostalgia for the pastoral foods of the distant past can wish away the fact that our ancestors lived mean, short lives, constantly afflicted with diseases, many of which can be directly attributed to what they did and did not eat."

I acknowledged earlier that the book doesn't and couldn't claim to be comprehensive in its coverage of contemporary debates that animate food studies. Yet, as someone who studies the US South (and lives on

the planet at this moment in history), I was dismayed by what felt like gaping obvious oversights. (These may be attributable, in part, to the book's rootedness in a conference that happened seven years before its publication.) However, the section on producing food, with the exception of Steve Striffler's discussion of food activism, didn't say nearly enough about labor and race. If *anything* is consistent about the American food system, it is its racialized exploitation of labor. ("Slavery" doesn't even show up in the index.) Arguably, the most urgent contemporary debates about US and global food systems are about their (increasingly undeniable) contributions to climate change (and the related marginalization of indigenous and rural livelihoods). Maybe, if we survive the decade, the editors can take up those concerns in volume 2.

Catarina Passidomo

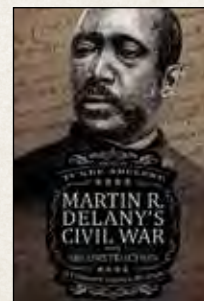
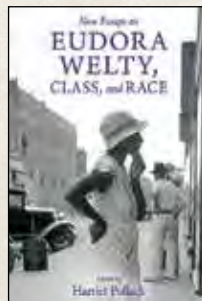
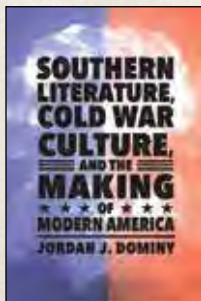
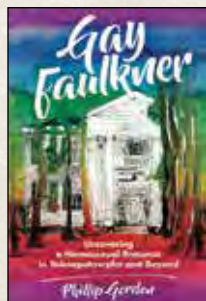
Images in Mississippi Medicine: A Photographic History of Medicine in Mississippi

By Lucius "Luke" M. Lampton, MD, and Karen A. Evers. Jackson: Mississippi State Medical Association, 2018. 266 pages. \$80.00 cloth.

Like many scholars of southern culture, Magnolia, Mississippi, physician Lucius M. Lampton emphasizes the role of place at the start of his book about Mississippi medicine. Lampton, however, cites not a poet or historian of the South but the Greek Hippocrates; and a decorative English rendering of his famous oath for doctors is among hundreds of illustrations gathered



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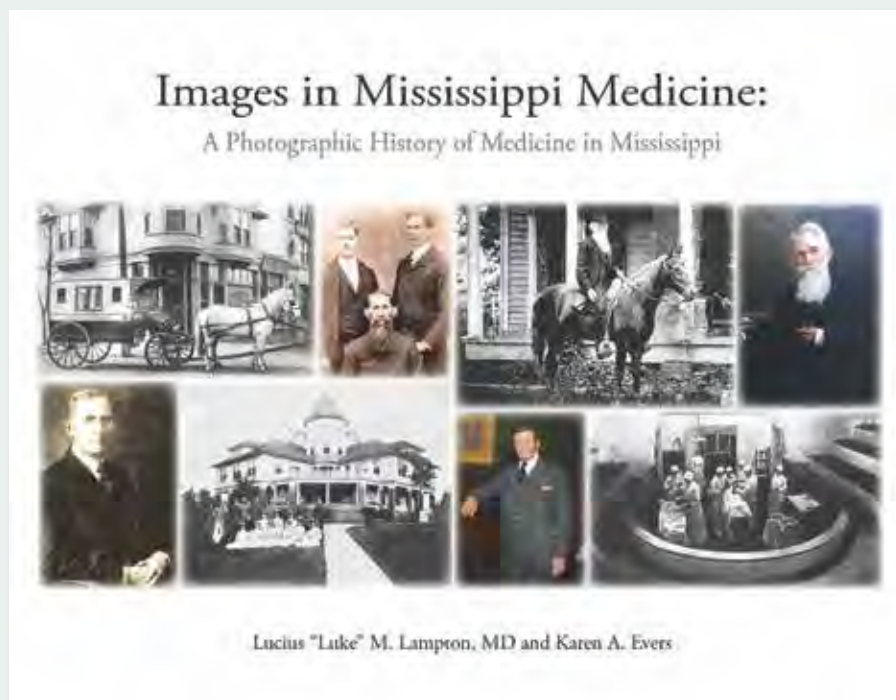
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Available at your local bookseller.

by Lampton and Karen A. Evers for this uniquely visual approach to the state's medical history. The award-winning collaborators have worked together for more than twenty years on the monthly *Journal of the Mississippi State Medical Association*, with Lampton as editor and Evers as managing editor. As medical editor for the *Mississippi Encyclopedia*, Lampton also contributed several entries on medicine and prominent physicians to the Center for the Study of Southern Culture's hefty volume. This work for the *JMSMA* and the *ME* was crucial in the formation of *Images in Mississippi Medicine* as both a trove of visual resources and a textual hybrid of history, biography, encyclopedia, and reminiscence.

In fewer than ten pages, Lampton's "Introduction: A History of Medicine in Mississippi" provides a concise and essential overview for the volume, beginning with Native American herbal knowledge and susceptibility to European epidemics and ending with twenty-first-century state legislation. Most subsequent pages feature at least one illustration—often a full-page enlargement of a photograph or postcard. For example, John Young Murry is pictured in 1904, erect in the saddle on his seventy-fifth birthday, looking "as he often did on a house-call." Besides presenting Dr. Murry as a "surgeon, soldier, statesman, social activist" who served as Tippah County Health Officer when smallpox vaccine was first available, the brief biography adds that he was William Faulkner's great-grandfather. The point is fascinating for Faulkner fans, who are more likely to identify William Clark Falkner, "the Old Colonel," as the famous great-grandfather.

Like the dust jacket and the volume's 11" x 9" dimensions, the strong optical appeal of almost every page might seem to suggest that this is a coffee-table book meant for casual browsing. In



fact, for some readers, browsing could be the best approach since chronology is not the book's organizational principle; thus, divisions of material frequently overlap with subsequent divisions. At almost a hundred pages, "Images in Mississippi Medicine," which follows the introduction, is the most comprehensive section, but the subsequent divisions—"Pioneers in Mississippi Medicine," "Mental Health in Mississippi Medicine," "Public Health in Mississippi Medicine," "Institutions of Mississippi Medicine," and "Organizations in Mississippi Medicine"—often return to people, places, and events described in earlier sections. Like Lampton's introduction, the detailed index is a valuable guide, especially for those with little previous knowledge of Mississippi medicine. With its long and often dramatic history, the Mississippi State Medical Association (publisher of *Images in Mississippi Medicine*) is among the most frequently cited subjects in the index, along with the University of Mississippi, the University's Medical Center and School of Medicine, and the Mississippi Legislature. Also

noteworthy in the index are the many references to yellow fever, which Lampton describes as "a major concern to the antebellum medical community of the old Southwest, especially Natchez and Washington."

Instead of choosing either to browse or to read the volume from start to finish, lovers of biography could turn immediately to "Pioneers" to learn about legendary doctors like John Murry, John Wesley Monette (who published a treatise on yellow fever in 1842), William Lattimore, Samuel Adolphus Cartwright, David Lewis Phares, and others. Students of public policy, on the other hand, might head to "Public Health" for insights on Mississippi's battles with yellow fever, rabies, pellagra, and tuberculosis. "Organizations in Mississippi Medicine" will be of greatest interest to physicians, but "Mental Health" should intrigue any reader.

Opening this segment with a three-page "History of the Treatment of Mental Illness in Mississippi," Lampton outlines many shifts in nomenclature and treatment from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century. The caption

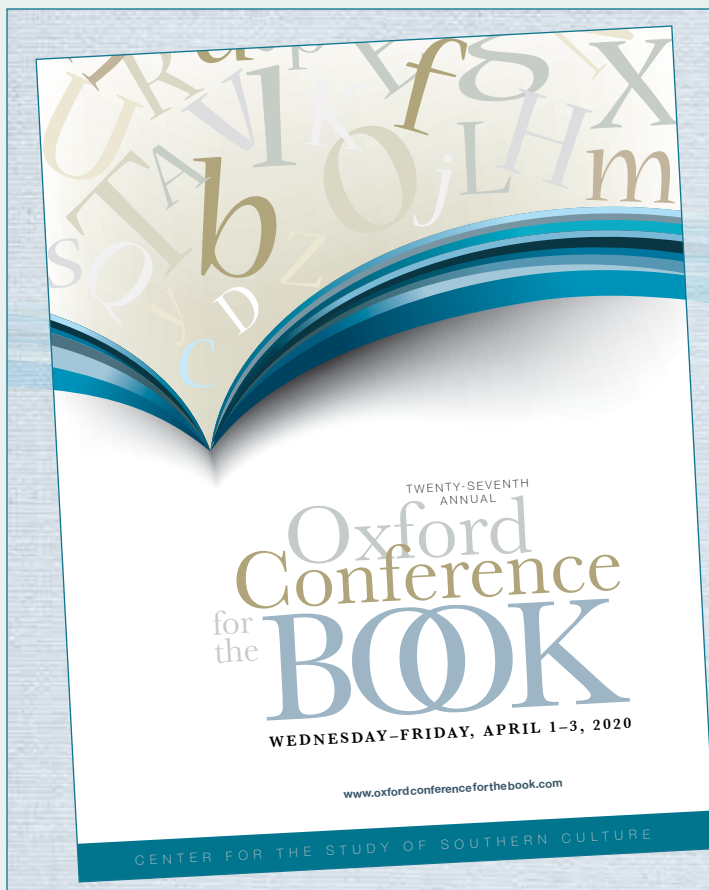
for a nineteenth-century engraving describes Dorothea Lynde Dix, a Boston activist who came to Mississippi in the 1840s to support the creation of a state asylum for the mentally ill. Although *Wikipedia* does not mention Mississippi among Dix's many lobbying sites, Lampton affirms that, when the 1848 legislature finally passed an appropriation for the Mississippi State Lunatic Asylum, "Her presence was acknowledged by all as critical for the institution's founding." Images of early mental health facilities portray grand hospitals and substantial "convalescent cottages" with landscaped lawns in Jackson and Meridian. In a full-page photograph from 1940, five young people pose before the imposing façade of the "old insane asylum," then located on the future site of the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The caption reports that the asylum was then a popular destination for Sunday afternoon drives (perhaps for the same reason that

impressive architecture set in wide lawns attracted asylum tourism in nineteenth-century America).

At the end of their short preface to *Images in Mississippi Medicine*, Lampton and Evers apologize for omissions and offer their "hopes for a future volume to fill in the rest of medicine's untold story." Additional images from the Civil War, the Depression, and the civil rights era could tell some of these stories. More attention could also be given to shortcomings of nineteenth-century medical pioneers, while still admitting their accomplishments. An expert on cholera and other southern diseases, Dr. Cartwright nevertheless justified slavery for physiological and Biblical reasons, as Lampton acknowledges. Former state and national poet-laureate Natasha Trethewey caustically exposes such racism in "Dr. Samuel Adolphus Cartwright on Dissecting the White Negro, 1851." Her poem would make a sad footnote to Cartwright's research on race.

The empathy Lampton and Evers demonstrate for those marginalized by mental illness is evident too in their several references to Mississippians long overlooked because of race, gender, or poverty. Expanding on medical experiences of women, LGBTQ citizens, the poor, and people of color would be a welcome addition to future volumes. A composite of the sixteen white men comprising Mississippi's first Board of Health in 1877 contrasts vividly with a recent color photo of "new rural physician scholars." Supported by the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program (authorized by the state legislature in 2007), this diverse group of twenty-first-century medical students gives promise that images of Mississippi physicians will increasingly represent the whole of Mississippi.

Joan Wylie Hall



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Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference Update

“Faulkner’s Modernisms,” July 19–23, 2020

The bracing task of rethinking the *who, what, where, when, and how* of literary modernism, with the life and work of Mississippi’s most celebrated modernist writer as Exhibit A, will be the subject of the forty-seventh annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha conference, slated for July 19–23, 2020, on the University of Mississippi campus. “Faulkner’s Modernisms” will bring together a distinguished slate of keynote speakers, panelists, and discussion leaders to explore Faulkner’s legacy as an imaginative chronicler and critic of modernity and of the various forms of the modernization process that proved constitutive of modernity in his world.

Next summer’s five keynote speakers include two scholars who are speaking at Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha for the first time. Susan Stanford Friedman is Hilldale Professor of English and Virginia Woolf Professor of English and Women’s Studies at the University of Wisconsin. An international authority on modernism and in gender studies, she is author of *Psyche Reborn: The Emergence of H.D.* (1981), a Choice Outstanding Academic Books award winner; *Penelope’s Web: Gender, Modernity, H.D.’s Fiction* (1990); *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter*, winner of the Perkins Prize for Best Book in Narrative Studies for 1998; *Planetary Modernisms: Provocations on Modernity Across Time* (2015), a much-discussed and -debated work among scholars in the field of “new modernism studies”; and most recently *Contemporary Revolutions: Turning back to the Future in Twenty-First-Century Literature and Art*.

Patricia E. Chu is lecturer in English at Harvard University and temporary assistant professor of English at Framingham State University. She is the author of *Race, Nationalism, and the State in British and American Modernism* (2007) and several articles on twentieth-century and contemporary literature and

art, including “William Faulkner and Biopolitics” (2015), “Dog and Dinosaur: The Modern Animal Story” (2007), and most recently, “Sea Urchins and Circuses: The Modernist Natural Histories of Jean Painlevé and Alexander Calder” (2018).

Returning to the conference as a 2020 keynoter is Julian Murphet, Jury Chair of English Language and Literature at Adelaide University. Professor Murphet is author of *Literature and Race in Los Angeles* (2001); *Multimedia Modernism: Literature and the Anglo-American Avant-Garde* (2009); *Todd Solondz* (2019); and most pertinent to this summer’s conference, *Faulkner’s Media Romance* (2017). He is also editor or coeditor of ten scholarly collections, including *Faulkner in the Media Ecology* (2015), a volume of proceedings from an international conference of the same name that he organized at the University of New South Wales in 2011.

Also returning is Leigh Anne Duck, associate professor of English at the University of Mississippi, where she also serves as editor of *The Global South*. Professor Duck is author of *The Nation’s Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, and U.S. Nationalism* (2006) and over two dozen essays and chapters in publications including *American Literary History*; *Safundi: The Journal of South African and American Studies’ CR: New Centennial Review*; *William Faulkner in Context*; *Global Faulkner: Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha, 2006*; *Faulkner in the Twenty-First Century: Faulkner in Yoknapatawpha, 2000*; *Keywords for Southern Studies*; and *American Cinema and the Southern Imaginary*.

Finally, we welcome back Sarah Gleeson-White, associate professor of English at the University of Sydney. A veteran of the 2015 conference on “Faulkner and Print Culture” and last summer’s “Faulkner’s Families” conference, she is author of *Strange Bodies: Gender and Identity in the Novels of Carson McCullers* (2003) and editor of

William Faulkner at Twentieth-Century Fox: The Annotated Screenplays (2017). Her forthcoming books include a monograph, *Literature in Motion: Film and the Formation of American Literature, 1890s–1930s* (2022) and a coedited collection, *New Faulkner Studies* (2021).

Other events scheduled for the conference include the popular “Teaching Faulkner” sessions led by James Carothers, Brian McDonald, Terrell Tebbets, and Theresa Towner. “Faulkner’s Modernisms” will also serve as host for the official launch of the Digital Yoknapatawpha project, a massive Faulkner database and data visualization project sponsored by the University of Virginia that has been in development for several years; a number of collaborators on the project will be present to demonstrate its applicability to Faulkner teaching and scholarship. Bookseller Seth Berner will lead a presentation on “Collecting Faulkner,” the John Davis Williams Library will exhibit rare Faulkner materials and sponsor a “Library Lecture” on a topic of interest to Faulkner buffs, and University Museums will welcome conference registrants to a special exhibit. Optional daylong guided tours will visit Faulkner-related locations in Oxford, northeast Mississippi, and the Mississippi Delta. We also plan to offer again a guided tour focusing on Lafayette County’s African American history after the enthusiastic reception of last summer’s tour, led by local historian and UM Southern Studies graduate student Rhondalyn Peairs.

Discount rates for the conference are available for groups of five or more students. Inexpensive dormitory housing is available for all registrants. Contact Mary Leach at mleach@olemiss.edu for details. For other inquiries, or to submit abstracts to the conference CFP by January 31, 2020, contact Jay Watson, Director, at jwatson@olemiss.edu.

Jay Watson

CONTRIBUTORS

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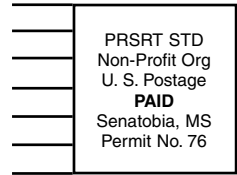


The poster for Oxford Film Fest 17 features the event title in large, stylized, colorful letters. Below the title, it says "MARCH 18-22, 2020". The background is a vibrant, abstract design with a pink and purple figure in the foreground. To the right of the main title, there is a vertical column of logos for various sponsors and partners, including Oxford, Mac, CRH, Cannon Motors of Mississippi, eventive, and others.

More Info: OxfordFilmFest.com **MARCH 18-22, 2020**



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