

Program



**16th Annual
Southern Studies
Conference
February 20-21, 2026**

Auburn University at Montgomery

Montgomery, Alabama

Welcome to Auburn University at Montgomery's Annual Southern Studies Conference

The Southern Studies Conference is an interdisciplinary gathering of scholars, artists, practitioners, and community members that is dedicated to the study of the history, politics, literature, arts, and culture of the American South. This year's meeting is the sixteenth iteration of the event. On behalf of the entire Auburn University at Montgomery community, the conference committee welcomes you to Montgomery, Alabama and the AUM campus.

This year's Conference features over forty oral presentations across fifteen panels, eleven poster presentations, and films on themes related to the South. In addition to these events, we are excited to have our keynote addresses by poet, Ashley Jones, and banjo-maker, Emily Ellis. The keynote addresses, art exhibit, poster session, and all breaks, luncheons, and receptions occur in Taylor 230. All panels will be held in Taylor 221 and 223.

We hope you're hungry, as well: light breakfast and lunch will be served both days of the conference, dinner on Saturday, and on Friday night we are excited to invite you to a reception at the Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum. Vegetarian options will be available for each meal.

We are thrilled to have you with us for the Southern Studies Conference. We hope you enjoy your time with us and that you learn something new about this most fascinating region of the United States.

Southern Studies Conference Committee

Kathryn Ashmore
Jordan Dominy
Kalu Kalu
Eunyoung Kim
Jacqueline McNett
Krystal Niel
Ben Severance
Lacey Sloan

Andrew McMichael, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to the many Auburn University at Montgomery faculty and staff who helped make the 2026 Southern Studies Conference Possible, but we would especially like to recognize:

Bill Broadway, Information Technology Services
Katie Poundstone, Conference Services
Aaron Frazee, Office of University Marketing
Rachael Mann, Information Technology Services

Sponsors

The following organizations generously sponsored elements of the Southern Studies Conference:

Alabama Humanities Alliance
Auburn University at Montgomery Faculty Senate Lectures Committee

Conference Wi-Fi Information

During your time on the AUM campus, Wi-Fi is available to all attendees by using:

SSID: Warhawk-SE
Password: aumSSC2026!

Conference at a Glance

Friday, February 20, 2026

8:00 am to 4:30 pm	Registration	Taylor 230
8:00 am to 9:00 am	Social Period	Taylor 230
9:00 am to 9:15 am	Conference Opening	Taylor 230
9:30 am to 10:45 am	Oral and Artistic Presentations	Taylor 221, 223, 230
11:00 am to 12:15 pm	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221, 223
12:30 pm to 1:15 pm	Luncheon	Taylor 230
1:15 pm-2:00 pm	Keynote Presentation: Emily Ellis	Taylor 230
2:15 pm-3:30 pm	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221, 223
3:45 pm-5:00 pm	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221, 223
5:00 pm to 5:15 pm	End of Day Announcements and Information	Taylor 230
5:15 pm to 6:00 pm	Dinner break on your own	
6:00 pm to 8:00 pm	Conference Social at The F. Scott & Zelda Fitzgerald Museum	919 Felder Ave., Montgomery, AL 36106

Conference at a Glance

Saturday, February 21, 2026

8:30 am to 11:30 pm	Registration	Taylor 230
8:30 am to 9:30 am	Social Period	Taylor 230
9:30 am to 10:45 am	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221, 223
11:00 am to 12:15 pm	Poster Session	Taylor 230
11:00 am to 12:15 pm	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221
12:30 pm to 1:15 pm	Luncheon	Taylor 230
1:15 pm to 2:00 pm	Keynote Session: Ashley Jones	Taylor 230
2:15 pm to 3:30 pm	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221, 223
3:45 pm to 5:00 pm	Oral Presentations	Taylor 221, 223
5:00 pm to 5:15 pm	End of Day Announcements and Information	Taylor 230
5:15 pm to 5:45 pm	Conference Closing & Student Awards	Taylor 230
5:45 pm to 6:30 pm	Dinner	Taylor 230

Friday, February 20, 2026

8:00 am to 4:30 pm
Taylor 230

Registration
Registration, check-in, and name-badge acquisition

8:00 am to 9:00 am
Taylor 230

Social Period
Coffee, tea, snacks

9:00 am to 9:15 am
Taylor 230

Conference Opening
Greetings and Introductions by Jordan Dominy
Welcome by Kim Brackett, College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Opening Remarks by Jordan Dominy

9:15 am to 9:30 am

Break to move to presentations

9:30 am to 10:45 am

Oral and Artistic Presentations

Panel 1: Black Artists of the South: An Africana Aesthetic
Chair: Seth Reno

Taylor 221

Nsenga K. Burton	Reclaiming the Frame: Black Southern Aesthetics in the Digital Age
Rhonda Collier	Everyday Use: The Use of Quilting to Democratize the HBCU Classroom
Crystal L. Keels	The Aesthetics of Truth: Storytelling in the South

Panel 2: History of the Colonial and Antebellum South
Chair: Kim Pyszka

Taylor 223

Aaron Hoggle	"Burnt out of all in a nights time:" Reconstructing the Medway Plantation House in the Colonial South Carolina Lowcountry'
Morgon Newquist	Life, Liberty, and Dower: Widows' Economic Self-Determination in the Chesapeake.

	Lisa Crutchfield	Frustration on Both Sides: Dissecting Failed Missionary Efforts in Early Georgia
<i>Taylor 230</i>	<i>Film Screening and Discussion</i> Castel Sweet <i>Sites of Memory: Reclaiming Place and Memory in the Southern Landscape</i>	
10:45 am to 11:00 am <i>Taylor 230</i>	Break to move to presentations Coffee, tea, water, and soft drinks	
11:00 am to 12:15 pm	Oral Presentations	
	<i>Panel 3: Alabama in Literature and Song</i> Chair: Hayat Alvi	
<i>Taylor 221</i>	Anais Shelley	Haunting the Narrative: How Absent Parents Create the Mockingbirds in Harper Lee's <i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>
	Valerie Smith	From <i>Back to Alabama</i> - Poems
	Seth Reno	Railroad Bill: Banjos, Blues, and Ballads
	<i>Panel 4 (Roundtable): Legal Compliance and Ethical Obligations under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA): Perspectives from Alabama Institutions</i> Moderator: LisaMarie Malischke	
<i>Taylor 223</i>	Megan LeBlanc	Auburn University at Montgomery
	Robby Elmore	Alabama Department of Archives and History
	Lauren Downs	University of Alabama Birmingham
	Mackenzie Miller	University of Alabama Birmingham
	Genevieve Mielke	University of Alabama
	Ariana Persico	University of Alabama
	Kimberly Pyszka	Auburn University at Montgomery
12:15 pm to 12:30 pm	Break to move to luncheon	
12:30 pm to 1:15 pm <i>Taylor 230</i>	Luncheon Announcements by Lacey Sloan	

1:15 pm to 2:00 pm **Keynote Presentation:** Emily Ellis
Taylor 230 *Rooted in the Land, Shaped by Hand: Farm, Art, and Ellis Banjos*
Introduction by Jordan Dominy

2:00 pm to 2:15 pm **Break to move to presentations**

2:15 pm to 3:30 pm **Oral Presentations**

Panel 5: (In)Justice in the South and Beyond
Chair: Courtney Waid

<i>Taylor 221</i>	Hayat Alvi	How the United States' Jim Crow Laws Inspired Nazi Race Policies in Germany
	Mary O'Quinn	How Arab Organizing Exceeds Western Standards of Social Movements Organizing: An Analysis of Palestinian Organizing in Birmingham, Alabama
	Rachel LaPointe	Protecting Those Who Protect and Serve: An Analysis of LEOKA Narratives

Panel 6: Alabama Culture
Chair: Robert Perkins

<i>Taylor 223</i>	Jesse Plichta-Kellar	Challah Down Home: Jewish Cookbooks in Alabama
	Stanley Veitch	Bama Brews: The Cultural Capital of Craft Beer Advertising in Alabama Breweries

3:30 pm to 3:45 pm **Break to move to presentations**
Taylor 230 Coffee, tea, and water

3:45 pm to 5:00 pm **Oral Presentations**

Taylor 221 ***Panel 7: Gender and Sexuality in the South***
Chair: Michelle Aitken

Madeline Birge	“Why is it so damn hard for people to talk?”: The South's History of Masculinity and Tennessee Williams
Marissa Boglin	Pedagogies of the Intimate: Rhetorical Policing from Classical Athens to the Jim Crow South
Tom Fish	Kinship Dramaturgies: Warren Johnston and the AIDS-Play’s Southern Roots

Panel 8: Digital Humanities in the South and Beyond

Chair: Beverly Rilett

Taylor 223

Beverly Rilett	Bridging Past and Present: Digital Humanities and the Recovery of Alabama’s Literary Legacy
Emilee Brown	Pedagogical Pathways through Alabama Authors of the 19th and 20th Centuries
Desire Ameigh	“From Columbines to Celebrity: Mapping Zelda Sayre’s Movements between 1909 and 1930 via Alabama Newspapers”
Jewel Odom	Comparative Analysis of Literary Digital Humanities: Nebraska Authors and the George Eliot Archive

5:00 pm to 5:15 pm End of Day Announcements and Information
Taylor 230 Lacey Sloan

5:15 pm to 6:00 pm Dinner break on your own

6:00 pm to 8:00 pm Conference Social at The F. Scott & Zelda Fitzgerald Museum
Venue address: 919 Felder Ave., Montgomery, AL 36106

Hors d’oeuvres and beverages.

Conference registrants are invited to a social hour at the F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum, the former home of one of America’s most famous literary couples. The setting captures the romance, creativity, and charm of the Jazz Age and encourages conference goers to explore Montgomery beyond AUM’s campus.

Transportation from AUM to the venue will be provided with conference registration.

Attire: Dressy Casual

Saturday, February 21, 2026

8:30 am to 11:30 pm **Registration**
Taylor 230 Registration, check-in, and name-badge acquisition

8:30 am to 9:30 am **Social Period**
Taylor 230 Overview of Day and Reminders by Lacey Sloan
coffee, tea, and snacks

9:30 am to 10:45 am **Oral Presentations**

Panel 9: Southern Fiction and the Grotesque

Chair: Michelle Aitken

<i>Taylor 221</i>	Elizabeth Ramsey	"Some Can't Be That Simple": Flannery O'Connor's Use of Nonviolent Horror in Relation to Romance, Vulnerability, and Disability
	Mya McLean	Breece D'J. Pancake and the Grotesque in Appalachian Fiction
	Olivia Williams	Southern Specters: How the Civil War Haunts Cormac McCarthy's Southern Gothic Grotesque

Panel 10: Public Spaces in the South

Chair: Jason Shifferd

<i>Taylor 223</i>	Jocelyn J Evans	Public Art and Meaning; Murals in the Urban and Rural South
	Keith Gaddie	The Southern Statehouse and the Southern Courthouse as Architectural Types
	James Riddlesperger	The Texas Courthouse Square as Community

10:45 am to 11:00 am **Break to move to presentations**
Taylor 230 Coffee, tea, water, and soft drinks

11:00 am to 12:15 pm Poster Session

<i>Taylor 230</i>	Yuliya Gluhova, Justice Earles, Daniela Pajon Rey, Sasha Veltri, and Cat Cox,	Scoping Review on Physiological and Nutritional Implications of Kaolin Consumption: Synthesis of Global Evidence on Potential Benefits and Risks
	Robert D. Carlson, Timothy D. Buckner, and Karen Ross	97th Regiment, United States Colored Troops
	Sara Kazi	Digital Divide and Academic Integrity: AI and Inequality in Southern Education
	Josh McNett and Jackie McNett	Securing the Southern Power Grid: Cyber Risks in Energy Corridors
	Kirstin Paulk	Constitution to Cost: Reframing Reform in Alabama Joint Prison Oversight Committee Hearings
	Angela Smith, Jennifer Grant, Shannon Jackson- King, and Jamesha Bennett	Navigating Imposter Syndrome in Southern Social Work Education: Reflections from a BSW Student at Auburn University at Montgomery
	Ren Dawson, Jurjen Smies, Austin Brown, and Megan LeBlanc	From Excavation to Repatriation: Managing the Fusihatchee (1EE191) Collection Under NAGPRA
	Michelle Fleishman	Kaolin Linked Appetites and Edibles (KLAE): A Biocultural Investigation of Geophagy in Alabama's Black Belt
	Yolanda Machado- Escudero	Detentions and Deportations in Northeast Georgia: Implications for Latina Women, their Families, and Communities
	Gabrielle Dawson, Emily Efferson, Ebony Gray, Jackson Harrison, Jessica Roy, and Tera McCoy	History on the Trails
	Jessica D. McCarty and Zakiyyah D. Jones	Mentorship in Motion: Exploring the Dynamics of Effective Mentor-Mentee Relationships for African American Women in

11:00 am to 12:15 pm Oral Presentations

<i>Taylor 221</i>	<i>Panel 11: Alabama History</i>	
	Chair: Keith Krawczynski	
	Regina Kirkland	Love Letters to St. Francis
	Megan Fletcher	Where is the old Kilby Prison?
	Scott Merriman	Not Just Advocates, but Zealous Ones

12:15 am to 12:30 pm Break to move to luncheon

12:30 pm to 1:15 pm	Luncheon
<i>Taylor 230</i>	Announcements by Lacey Sloan

1:15 pm to 2:00 pm	Keynote Session: Ashley Jones
<i>Taylor 230</i>	<i>What the Mirror Said: The Necessity of [Southern] Black Women in Poetry</i>
	Introduction by Lacey Sloan

2:00 pm to 2:15 pm Break to move to presentations

2:15 pm to 3:30 pm Oral Presentations

<i>Taylor 221</i>	<i>Panel 12: Southern Politics</i>	
	Chair: Ben Severance	
	John Browning	Blazing the Trails of Professional Identity Formation in the Reconstruction South: Comparing the First Black Lawyers of Alabama & Georgia
	Joel Campbell	Four Paths to Southern Populism: Watson, Long, Kefauver, and Wallace
<i>Taylor 223</i>	<i>Panel 13: The South in Art and Digital Culture</i>	
	Chair: Jordan Dominy	
	Claire Ittner	Black Magnolia: Rosenwald Fellows Revision the South

	Tom Attah	The Digital South: Blues, Myth, Memory, and Video Games
	Bryce Lafferty	Paint Rock: Drawing Knowledge from Nature
3:30 pm to 3:45 pm <i>Taylor 230</i>	Break to move to presentations Coffee, tea, water, and soft drinks	
3:45 pm to 5:00 pm	Oral Presentations	
	<i>Panel 14: Telling Stories in the South through the Lens of Documentary Film</i>	
	Chair: Melanie Ho	
<i>Taylor 221</i>	Olivia Whittington and Samson Oklobia	Shaped by Clay
	Greta Koshenina	
	Angela Tucker	scenes from <i>The Inquisitor</i>
	Shiraz Ahmed	
	Codey Stickels and Ashish Shretha	
	<i>Panel 15: Southern Resiliences</i>	
	Chair: Shirley Toland-Dix	
<i>Taylor 223</i>	Kizzi-Eliza Frisby	Southern Practice: Rediscovering Urban Agriculture as Resilience
	Lisa Gezon, Kenton Bartlett	Psychedelics and Personal Transformation: Opportunities and Challenges in Southern States
5:00 pm to 5:15 pm	Break to move to closing	
5:15 pm to 5:45 pm <i>Taylor 230</i>	Conference Closing & Student Awards End of Day Announcements by Lacey Sloan Student Award Presentations by Jordan Dominy Closing remarks by Lacey Sloan	
5:45 pm-6:30 pm <i>Taylor 230</i>	Dinner	

Thank you for joining us. We look forward to seeing you next year!