

Joseph M. Thompson
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EMPLOYMENT

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Mississippi State University, 2019–present

EDUCATION

- Ph.D. United States History, University of Virginia, 2019
M.A. United States History, University of Virginia, 2015
M.A. Southern Studies, University of Mississippi, 2013
B.A. American Studies and Anthropology, Phi Beta Kappa, University of Alabama, 2002

PUBLICATIONS

Book

Cold War Country: How Nashville's Music Row and the Pentagon Created the Sound of American Patriotism (The University of North Carolina Press, 2024).

Book Chapters

- Forthcoming “Confederates in the Record Cabinet: Civil War Memory and the Historical Turn in Modern Country Music,” in *They Are Dead, and Yet They Live: Civil War Memories in a Polarized America*, eds. Jennifer M. Murray and John Kinder (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2025).
- 2022 “Country Music, the Blues, and American Agriculture” in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to American Agricultural History*, ed. R. Douglas Hurt (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons).
- 2019 “‘Home Is Where the Hatred Is’: Gil Scott-Heron’s Toxic Domestic Spaces and the Rhizomatic South” in *Ecocriticism and the Future of Southern Studies*, ed. Zackary Vernon (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press). (volunteered)
- 2018 “Planes, Pencils, and Politics: How Race and Labor Practices Shaped Postwar Atlanta,” in *Reconsidering Southern Labor History: Race, Class, and Power*, eds. Matthew Hild and Keri Leigh Merritt (Gainesville: University of Florida Press). (volunteered)
Awarded “Best Book Related to Labor Education 2018-2019” by the United Labor Education Association.

Journal Articles

- 2024 “The Banjo: Five Strings for Freedom in Cold War America,” *Modern American History* 7, no. 2 (July 2024).
- 2021 “The ‘Good Old Rebel’ at the Heart of the Radical Right,” *Southern Cultures* 27, no. 4 (Winter 2020): 124-139.
Ranked number 4 in the journal’s “Top Ten of 2021.”
- 2018 “Nostalgic for Utopia: Anne Romaine’s Folk Music Protest in the New Left South,” *Southern Cultures* 24, no. 3 (Fall 2018): 45-61.

- 2018 “DASH-Amerikan: Keeping Up with the Social Media Ecologies of the Kardashians,” co-authored with the Praxis Digital Humanities cohort, *American Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (September 2018): 609-611.

Book Reviews

- Forthcoming Review of *Red Reckoning: The Cold War and the Transformation of American Life*, by Michael Boulton and Tobias T. Gibson, eds. *American Historical Review*.
- Forthcoming Review of *Southern History Remixed: On Rock'n'Roll and the Dilemma of Race*, by Michael T. Bertrand. *Journal of Southern History*.
- 2022 Review of *Making Music in Music City: Conversations with Nashville Music Industry Professionals*, by John Markert. *Journal of Southern History* 88, no. 2 (May 2022): 433-435.
- 2020 Review of *The South of the Mind: American Imaginings of White Southernness, 1960-1980*, by Zachary J. Lechner. *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 118, no. 2 (Spring 2020).
- 2020 Review of *I'd Fight the World: A Political History of Old-Time, Hillbilly, and Country Music*, by Peter La Chapelle. *The Journal of Popular Music Studies* 32, no. 1 (March 2020): 137-139.
- 2019 Review of *Blackface Nation: Race, Reform, and Identity in American Popular Music, 1812-1925*, by Brian Roberts. *The Journal of African American History* 104, no. 3 (Summer 2019): 485-488.
- 2018 “A Polyphonic South: Tyina L. Steptoe on Houston’s Racial and Sonic Fluidity,” *South: A Scholarly Journal* 49, no. 2 (Spring 2017/2018): 200-202.
- 2016 Review of *Africa in Stereo: Modernism, Music, and Pan-African Solidarity*, by Tsitsi Ella Jaji. *The Journal of African American History* 101, No. 3 (Summer 2016): 380-382.
- 2012 Review of *Battle Hymns: The Power and Popularity of Music in the Civil War*, by Christian McWhirter. *The Southern Register* (Summer 2012): 24-25.

Public Writing and Media Appearances

- 2024 “[The Sound of Patriotism](#),” *On the Media*, WNYC broadcast and podcast, July 5, 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* quoted in Angie Jaime, “[Country Music and Música Mexicana Share a Deep History Worth Remembering](#),” *Teen Vogue*, June 27, 2024.
- 2024 “[The History—and Money—Behind Country Music’s Embrace of the U.S. Military](#),” *Time*, June 6, 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* interview with Book Passage Bookstore’s “[Conversations with Authors](#),” online event, May 16, 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* referenced in Cynthia Vacca Davis, “[‘Cowboy Carter’ Is A Lot to Process, But So Is Being Black in America](#),” *Baptist News Global*, April 18, 2024.
- 2024 Interview with [MSU A&S Vision TV](#), April 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* reviewed in [Clarion-Ledger/Hattiesburg America](#).
- 2024 *Cold War Country* interview with [Lawfare’s Chatter Podcast](#), April 11, 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* interview with [New Books Network Podcast](#), April 6, 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* interview with [Friendly City Books Podcast](#), April 1, 2024.
- 2024 Profile of *Cold War Country* by Craig Fehrman, “[How Nashville and the Pentagon Fell Into Harmony](#),” *The Boston Globe*, March 31, 2024.
- 2024 Quoted in Ben Finley, “[Toby Keith wrote all kinds of country songs. His legacy might be post-9/11 American anger](#),” Associated Press, February 9, 2024.
- 2024 *Cold War Country* referenced on “[Remembering Toby Keith and His Legacies](#),” *New York Times Popcast*, February 27, 2024.

- 2024 Interviewed for "[Looking Back At Toby Keith's Impact On Music & Affiliation With America's Culture War](#)," *AirTalk with Larry Mantle*, LAist, 89.3 FM, Los Angeles NPR, February 13, 2024.
- 2021 "[The Scripto Strikes](#)," *The New Georgia Encyclopedia*.
- 2020 "[The Revolution Might Be Televised](#)," interview with *The Southern Register* (Fall 2020), 24-25.
- 2020 "[The longtime connection between race, country music and military recruitment](#)," *The Washington Post*, June 9, 2020.
- 2019 "[GI Bill opened doors to college for many vets, but politicians created a separate one for blacks](#)," *The Conversation*, November 9, 2019.
- 2019 "Behind the Scenes at *BackStory*," C-SPAN 3, original airdate July 4, 2019.
- 2018 "[The Scripto Strikes: James V. Carmichael and Black Women's Labor Organizing in Downtown Atlanta](#)," *Atlanta Studies*, September 4, 2018.
- 2018 "[Whitey on the Moon](#)," *Enviro-History*, March 16, 2018.
- 2018 "[Crowning Glory: A History of Hair in America](#)" interview with the *Slate* podcast *BackStory*, original air date May 4, 2018.
- 2017 "[Stars, Stripes, and Country Music](#)," interview with PBS's *American Experience*, November 8, 2017.
- 2016 "[Woody Guthrie and the Making of the Folk](#)," *We're History*, July 14, 2016.
- 2016 "[Progressivism in the South](#)," *We're History*, January 26, 2016.

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- 2022 A&S Academic Excellence Travel Support, Mississippi State University.
- 2021 A&S Academic Excellence Travel Support, Mississippi State University.
- 2018 Mellon/ACLS Dissertation Completion Fellowship (2018-2019).
- 2018 Dean's Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Virginia (declined).
- 2017 Smithsonian Institution Predoctoral Fellowship, National Museum of American History and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington, D.C. (2017-2018).
- 2017 Digital Humanities Prototype Fellowship, The Scholars' Lab, University of Virginia.
- 2016 Robert J. Huskey Conference & Travel Fellowship, Corcoran Department of History, University of Virginia.
- 2016 Joel Williamson Visiting Scholar Grant, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill.
- 2016 Reed-Fink Award in Southern Labor History, Southern Labor Archives, Georgia State University.
- 2016 William and Madeline Welder Smith Research Travel Award, Briscoe Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin.
- 2016 Praxis Program in the Digital Humanities Fellowship, The Scholars' Lab, University of Virginia (2016-2017).
- 2016 Rose Library Fellowship in Modern Politics and Southern History, Emory University, Atlanta, Georgia.
- 2015 Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences Summer Research Award, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, University of Virginia.
- 2014 Institute for Public History Internship at the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia.
- 2014 Public Humanities Fellowship in South Atlantic Studies, Virginia Humanities, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- 2012 Short-term Research Fellowship, Frances S. Summersell Center for the Study of the South, University of Alabama.

- 2012 Summer Research Assistantship, University of Mississippi.
 2011 Chris Fullerton Fellowship, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi (2011-2013).
 2011 Full-time Graduate Assistantship, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi (2011-2013).

AWARDS

- 2021 William E. Parrish Outstanding Teaching Award, Mississippi State University.
 2019 Selected to join the “Southern Summit,” a cohort of emerging scholars studying the U.S. South, University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill.
 2017 First Prize, Huskey Research Exhibition in the Arts and Humanities, University of Virginia.
 2016 Graduate Teaching Award, American Studies Program, University of Virginia.
 2015 Critoph Award, Southern American Studies Association.
 2015 Finalist, Louis Pelzer Memorial Award, Organization of American Historians.
 2013 Lucille and Motee Daniels Award, Best Thesis in Southern Studies, University of Mississippi.
 2013 Graduate Achievement Award, University of Mississippi.
 2012 Lucille and Motee Daniels Award, Best Paper by a First Year Graduate Student, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi.
 2012 Anne Abadie Award, Best Documentary Work, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

Featured Speaker

- 2025 “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism,” Center for Presidential History, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas.
 2024 “The Racial and Political History of Modern Country Music,” Racial Reconciliation Task Force, Episcopal Diocese of Mississippi, online event.
 2024 “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism,” Fall for the Book Festival, Fairfax, Virginia.
 2024 “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism,” Department of History, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia.
 2024 “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism,” George C. Marshall Foundation, Lexington, Virginia (*scheduled for October*).
 2024 “Cold War Country and the Memphis Blues,” Stax Museum of American Soul Music, Memphis, Tennessee.
 2024 “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism,” SouthTalks, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi.
 2024 *Cold War Country* Faculty Book Talk, Mississippi State University.
 2021 Popular Music Books in Progress, Online event hosted by the *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, the Pop Conference, and IASPM-US.
 2020 “Drafting Elvis: Memphis, Music, and the Military,” Rhodes College, Memphis, Tennessee.
 2019 “Seems Like I’ve Been Here Before: Historical Connections Between the 1960s and the Present,” Lecture for the Columbus and Lowndes County Historical Society.
 2018 “ReSounding the Archives,” Symposium for the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, Keynote Speaker, University of Virginia.
 2017 “Planes, Pencils, and Politics: How Race and Labor Practices Shaped Postwar Atlanta,”

- 2013 Southern Labor History Brown Bag, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia.
 “‘I Won’t Be Reconstructed’: Exploring Confederate Memory in Popular Culture,”
 Center for the Study of Southern Culture, University of Mississippi, Oxford, Mississippi.

Panelist

- 2021 “Patriotism, Protest, and Power: Enacting Change during the Vietnam War and Broader Cold War,” Teaching Seminar, Institute for the Humanities, Mississippi State University.
- 2020 Discussion of *Ecocriticism and the Future of Southern Studies*, Oxford Conference for the Book, Oxford, Mississippi (canceled for COVID-19).
- 2019 Graduate Council Luncheon, “Doing Digital History,” Southern Historical Association, Louisville, Kentucky.
- 2019 “Political History, Podcasting, and Public Engagement” with Brian Balogh, Nathan Connolly, and Joyce Chaplin, Remaking American Political History Conference, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana.
- 2018 “Country Music and the Vietnam War,” Charles K. Wolfe Memorial Panel, International Country Music Conference, Nashville, Tennessee.
- 2015 “Nat ‘King’ Cole’s Civil War: How the Intimate Sounds of Pop Music Ignited Alabama’s Racial Tensions in the 1950s,” American Studies Association, Toronto, Canada.
- 2012 Photography exhibit contributor, “A Human Environment: Space and Place in North Mississippi,” Gammill Gallery, University of Mississippi.

Guest Lecturer

- 2024 “Cold War Country: Music Row, the Pentagon, and the Sound of American Patriotism,” for SST 118, “Country Music History,” Professor Darren Grem, University of Mississippi.
- 2021 “Is Country Music White Music?,” for HIST 2559, “Whiteness: A History of a Racial Category,” Professor Andrew Karhl and Jalane Schmidt, University of Virginia.
- 2015 “From Caruso and Crooners to the Beatles and Bieber: Musical Stars and the Political Potentials of Fandom,” for AMST 2001 “Introduction to American Studies,” Professor Carmenita Higginbotham, University of Virginia.
- 2014 “Elvis Presley and the Cultural Reaction to Civil Rights,” for HIUS 3232 “The South in the Twentieth Century,” Professor Grace Hale, University of Virginia.

CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION (SELECTED)

- 2024 “‘I hear America singing’: Music Row and the Business of Country Music Politics in the 1960s,” Organization of American Historians, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 2024 “Confederates in the Record Cabinet: White Mansions and Modern Country Music’s Lost Cause,” Pop Conference, Los Angeles, California.
- 2023 “Hillbilly Reveille: The Armed Forces and the Global Market for Country Music,” Society for Military History, San Diego, California.
- 2022 “Southern Nights: Allen Toussaint’s Disappearing Louisiana,” American Studies Association, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 2022 “‘Best Liked World-Wide’: The Armed Forces and the Global Market for Country Music,” Business History Conference, Mexico City, Mexico (moved online).
- 2021 “‘I Wanna Kill Sam’: Obedience, Revolt, and the U.S. Military’s Hip-Hop Problem,” American Studies Association, San Juan, Puerto Rico (moved online).
- 2021 “Black on Broadway: Cecil Gant and the Black Talent that Built Nashville’s White Music Industry,” Urban History Association, Detroit, Michigan.
- 2020 “G.I. Blues: The Military Roots of Country’s Teenaged Rebellion,” Museum of Pop

- Culture Music Conference (moved online).
- 2019 “Explaining Presidential Scandals,” Managing Scandal in the White House Conference, Panel Chair, Mississippi State University.
- 2019 “Undead and Unreconstructed: The ‘Good Old Rebel’ and the Ghosts of the Confederacy in Popular Song,” Museum of Pop Culture Music Conference, Seattle, Washington.
- 2019 “‘It was home’: U.S. Soldiers and the Creation of a Global Country Music Community International Association for the Study of Popular Music, New Orleans, Louisiana.
- 2019 “‘Whatever happened to the protest and the rage?’: Gil Scott-Heron and the Pentagon’s Environmental Racism,” American Historical Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- 2018 “Cadence Count: Capturing Soldiers’ Voices for State Violence,” American Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia.
- 2018 “Foreign Love: U.S. Soldiers, Country Music, and the Gender Politics of Transnational Sexual Encounters,” Museum of Pop Culture Music Conference, Presenter and panel organizer, Seattle, Washington.
- 2018 “‘The Army Goes Country and Western’: Race, Politics, and Music Row Militarism in the 1950s, International Association for the Study of Popular Music, Nashville, Tennessee.
- 2018 “Geisha Girls, Frauleins, and Filipino Babies: U.S. Soldiers, Country Music, and the Racial Politics of Transnational Sexual Encounters,” Southern Historical Association, Birmingham, Alabama.
- 2017 “Listening for the Silent Majority: Political Dissent and Country Music Militarism During Vietnam,” American Studies Association, Chicago, Illinois.
- 2017 “Planes, Pencils, and Politics: How Race and Labor Practices Shaped Postwar Atlanta,” Labor and Working Class History Association, Seattle, Washington.
- 2017 “‘Brought to You By Your United States Air Force’: How Country Radio and Military Recruitment Joined Forces in the 1960s,” Museum of Pop Culture Music Conference (formerly EMP), Presenter and panel organizer, Seattle, Washington.
- 2017 “From North Mississippi to Okinawa: O.B. McClinton, Military Integration, and the Racial Politics of Country Music,” Southern American Studies Association, Presenter and panel organizer, Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 2016 “‘Home Is Where the Hatred Is’: Gil Scott-Heron’s Toxic Domestic Spaces,” American Studies Association, Presenter and panel organizer, Denver, Colorado.
- 2016 “Black Speck: The Confounding Country Voice of O.B. McClinton,” EMP Pop Conference, Presenter and panel organizer, Seattle, Washington.
- 2016 “Anne Romaine’s Progressive Nostalgia: The Politics of Folk Music Activism in the Sunbelt South,” Organization of American Historians, Providence, Rhode Island.
- 2015 “Nat ‘King’ Cole’s Civil War: How the Intimate Sounds of Pop Music Ignited Alabama’s Racial Tensions in the 1950s,” Southern American Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia.

DIGITAL HUMANITIES AND PUBLIC HISTORY

- 2022, 2024 Curator of the “Interpreting the Movement” Civil Rights History Exhibit, Mississippi State University Libraries.
- 2020- present Member of Digital Humanities Task Force, Mississippi State University Libraries.
- 2016-2018 Researcher and Writer, *BackStory* a *Slate* podcast produced by Virginia Humanities, Charlottesville, Virginia.
- 2017- present Development of Jukebox, an Omeka plug-in that embeds sound wave files within the Neatline mapping function.
- 2016-2017 Website Development and Writer, Praxis Program in the Digital Humanities Fellowship, The Scholars’ Lab, University of Virginia.
- 2014-2017 Website Management and Omeka archival software instruction, AMST 2001

- 2014 “Introduction to American Studies” website, University of Virginia.
Website Development and Content Curator, *Remaking Virginia: Transformation Through Emancipation* online exhibit, Library of Virginia. Richmond, Virginia. Institute for Public History Summer Internship.
- 2012-2013 Docent, L.Q.C. Lamar House, National Historic Landmark. Oxford, Mississippi.
- 2002-2009 Archaeologist, University of Texas – San Antonio and Jacksonville State University.
- 1998-2001 Student Assistant, Alabama Museum of Natural History, Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

TEACHING

Undergraduate Courses

- The U.S. since 1945
Early U.S. History Survey
The Modern Civil Rights Movement
Race and Popular Music
The History of Southern Music
Honors Seminar: The U.S. South and Popular Music

Graduate Courses

- The U.S. Since 1945
Race and Popular Music
20th Century U.S. Cultural History
20th Century Southern U.S. History

Dissertation Director

Xavier E. Sivels, “‘Freakish Man’: Sexual Blues, Sacred Beliefs, and the Transformation of Black Queer Identity, 1870-1959,” Mississippi State University, completed in 2024.

Colin Campbell, “Cause for Alarm: Punk Rock Politics, Race, and the Problem of Irony in Modern America,” Mississippi State University, completed in 2022.

SERVICE

- 2024-present Graduate Admissions Committee, Department of History, Mississippi State University.
- 2024 A&S Faculty Senate, Mississippi State University.
- 2023 Certified LGBTQ+ Safe Zone Ally.
- 2022-present Program Committee for “The Business of Music Symposium,” Mississippi State University Libraries.
- 2021-present Organizer of the History A.V. Club monthly colloquium for graduate students and faculty in the Race, Identity, Gender, and Region concentration at Mississippi State University.
- 2021-present History Department Advisory Committee.
- 2020-present Mississippi State University Honor Code Council.
- 2020-present Manuscript peer-reviewer for *The Journal of Popular Music Studies*, *Atlantis*, *Alabama Review*, *Religion and Literature*, and the University of South Carolina Press.
- 2019-2021 General Examiner for Modern U.S. History Comprehensive Exams, Mississippi State University.
- 2019-2021 Undergraduate Committee, Department of History, Mississippi State University.
- 2015-present Organized panels for conferences held by the American Studies Association, the Southern American Studies Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the Pop Conference.

2015-2018 Managing Editor, *Essays in History*, a peer-reviewed journal published by the Corcoran
Department of History, University of Virginia.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Organization of American Historians
American Studies Association
American Historical Association
Southern Historical Association
International Association of Popular Music Studies