



THE LAWTON M. CHILES, JR. CENTER
FOR FLORIDA HISTORY
presents the

2025-2026

FLORIDA LECTURE SERIES



FLORIDA SOUTHERN COLLEGE®



THE 2025-2026 FLORIDA LECTURE SERIES IS
SPONSORED IN PART BY WUSF PUBLIC MEDIA.

2025-2026 SCHEDULE

Lectures begin at 7 p.m. and are held in Branscomb Auditorium unless otherwise noted. All programs are free and open to the public.

September 25, 2025

Gilbert King

Bone Valley: A True Story of Injustice and Redemption in the Heart of Florida

October 9, 2025

Bob Kealing

Seventy Years of Elvis and Florida: 1955-2025

November 6, 2025

Joy Castro

Recovering a Lost Social World: Cuban Key West in the 1910s

BRANSCOMB 202

January 22, 2026

Jason Vuic

A Town without Pity: AIDS, Race, and Resistance in Florida's Deep South

February 19, 2026

Vernon Burton

Justice Deferred: Race in Florida and the United States Supreme Court

April 2, 2026

Hilary Swain

Archbold Biological Station: The Foundation, Fascination, and Future of a Florida Treasure

BRANSCOMB 202

SEPTEMBER 25

GILBERT KING

Writer, Producer, Brooklyn, NY

Bone Valley: A True Story of Injustice and Redemption in the Heart of Florida

In 1987, when Michelle Schofield was found brutally stabbed to death, suspicion quickly turned to her husband, Leo Schofield. He was ultimately convicted and sentenced to life in prison, despite a flawed investigation, a flimsy case, and ignored critical evidence. More than thirty years later, author Gilbert King was tipped off about Leo's case, and was astonished by what he found: layers of corruption, unsound evidence, and deep-seated errors. As he digs deeper, King uncovers startling new evidence of Leo's innocence, while exposing connections between Michelle's murder and a teenager linked to a series of violent crimes in Central Florida.



A writer and producer, Gilbert King is the author of *Devil in the Grove*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction in 2013. His work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Atlantic*, and it focuses on race, civil rights, and the death penalty. His earlier books include *The Execution of Willie Francis* and *Beneath a Ruthless Sun*.

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LILLY & BROWN LLP

OCTOBER 9

BOB KEALING

Writer, Orlando, FL

Seventy Years of Elvis and Florida: 1955-2025

In 2025, Florida marks seventy years since a young Elvis Presley performed his concerts in the Sunshine State.

Though his life was cut short in 1977, Presley's connection to Florida continued

to shape his legacy for decades. To commemorate this milestone, author Bob Kealing offers fresh insights into the pivotal role Florida played in the King of Rock-and-Roll's rise as both a music icon and film star.



Bob Kealing is the author of five books on Florida's rich history and culture, including *Elvis Ignited: The Rise of an Icon in Florida*. A six-time Emmy Award-winning journalist and two-time Edward R. Murrow Award recipient, Kealing is also a dedicated historic preservationist. He founded four Florida Heritage sites honoring cultural legends Jack Kerouac, the Allman Brothers Band, Gram Parsons, and Lynyrd Skynyrd.

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Historic Lakeland, Inc.

2025

NOVEMBER 6

LOCATION: BRANSCOMB 202

JOY CASTRO

Willa Cather Professor of English at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Recovering a Lost Social World: Cuban Key West in the 1910s

*In Tears and Flowers:
A Poet's Migration in
Old Key West,*

Joy Castro offers a rare and intimate look into the early 20th-century Cuban community of Key West through the poetry of her

grandfather, Feliciano Castro. A Galician Cuban who spent decades in Key West, Feliciano worked as a cigar factory lector, a newspaper editor, a printer, and a writer. The collection explores themes of national identity, migration, belonging, and courtship within the Cuban emigree society, while drawing connections between Florida and Spanish-speaking communities across the Caribbean & Spain.



Joy Castro grew up in Miami, London, and West Virginia, and lived in Texas and Indiana before settling in Nebraska, where she is the Willa Cather Professor of English and Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. She is the author of numerous books, including *Brilliant Flame* and *Island of Bones*.

JANUARY 22

JASON VUIC

Writer, Fort Worth, TX

A Town without Pity: AIDS, Race, and Resistance in Florida's Deep South

In the 1980s, Arcadia, Florida, a small town shaped by cowboy roots, low-wage agricultural work, and a violent frontier past, stood at the intersection of rural West Texas ruggedness and the stately homes



and bitter race relations of the Deep South. In *A Town without Pity*, author Jason Vuic tells two heartbreaking stories from Arcadia that captured national attention at the end of the Reagan era. These events forced the community to confront not only the fear and misinformation surrounding the AIDS crisis, but also the enduring legacies of its racist history.

Jason Vuic is the author of *The Swamp Peddlers: How Lot Sellers, Land Scammers, and Retirees Built Modern Florida and Transformed the American Dream*, which won the Florida Book Awards Gold Medal for Florida Nonfiction and the Florida Historical Society's Charlton Tebeau Award. His other books include *The Yucks: Two Years in Tampa with the Losingest Team in NFL History* and *The Yugo: The Rise and Fall of the Worst Car in History*.

FEBRUARY 19

VERNON BURTON

*Judge Matthew J. Perry Distinguished Chair
of History at Clemson University*

Justice Deferred: Race in Florida and the United States Supreme Court

“Race” is America’s most salient topic today, and the Supreme Court probably a close second. Vernon Burton combines these topics to analyze “race” as a concept and how our court system, especially the U.S. Supreme Court, helped create the idea of different races. Using Florida as a lens, the program will address the Supreme Court’s involvement with Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and modern-day problems such as affirmative action, criminal justice, and discrimination.



Vernon Burton is the Judge Matthew J. Perry Distinguished Chair of History at Clemson University. He is the author of more than twenty authored or edited books, including his most recent *Justice Deferred: Race and the Supreme Court*, co-authored with Armand Derfner, and *The Age of Lincoln*.

The Robert and Rose Stahl Criminal Justice Lecture honors the memories of Robert and Rose Stahl. Mr. Stahl served more than 30 years as a police officer, including his years as chief of police in North Miami Beach. The family of Robert and Rose Stahl has generously made these lectures available to Florida Southern College.

APRIL 2

LOCATION: BRANSCOMB 202

HILARY SWAIN, PH.D.

*Executive Director, Emeritus,
Archbold Biological Station*

Archbold Biological Station: The Foundation, Fascination, and Future of a Florida Treasure

As Executive Director and Senior Research Biologist at the world-renowned Archbold Biological Station (an 8,800-acre preserve on Florida's Lake Wales Ridge near Lake Placid), Hilary Swain has dedicated



her career to studying, protecting, and preserving the state's unique ecosystems. Over her decades of work, she has played a vital role in helping neighbors and agencies secure 53,000 acres of contiguous conservation lands. In her wide-ranging address, she will reflect on her thirty-year tenure at Archbold and explore the station's vital role in conservation biology, ecosystem sustainability, survival of listed species, and the Florida Wildlife Corridor.

A native of Aberdeen, Scotland, Hilary Swain earned her doctorate from the University of Newcastle in England. A passionate advocate for science-based conservation, Swain is known for building lasting partnerships among scientists, landowners, environmentalists, and government agencies at all levels.

THIS LECTURE IS GENEROUSLY SPONSORED BY
PROFESSOR WALTER W. MANLEY II, FSC ALUMNUS

2026



THE LAWTON M. CHILES, JR. CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORY

Founded in 2001, The Lawton M. Chiles Center for Florida History strives to enhance the teaching, study, and writing of Florida history. The Center seeks to preserve the state's past through cooperative efforts with historical societies, preservation groups, museums, public programs, media, and interested persons. This unique center, housed in the Sarah D. and L. Kirk McKay, Jr., Archives Center is a source of continuing information created to increase appreciation for Florida history.

ABOUT THE LECTURE SERIES

The Lawton M. Chiles, Jr. Florida Lecture Series is a forum that brings speakers to the Florida Southern College campus to explore Florida life and culture from a wide range of disciplines, including history, public affairs, law, sociology, criminology, anthropology, literature, and art. The overall objective of the series is to bring members of the community, the faculty, and the student body together to interact with and learn from leading scholars in their fields.

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