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## Alabama Myths and Public Memory

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# RCEU 2023 Project Proposal

## Project Title

Alabama Myths and Public Memory

## Faculty Information

Name: Dr. John H. Saunders\_\_\_\_\_

Status: Lecturer\_\_\_\_\_

Department/Program: Communication Arts\_\_\_\_\_

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Proposal ID RCEU23-CM-JHS-01\_\_\_\_\_

Instructions are on the last page.

# RCEU 2023 Project Proposal

## I. Project Description

Public memory studies is interdisciplinary by its very nature. Alabama provides us with a treasure trove of public memory sites, stories, and myths. The focus of this project is to research the biggest myths of Alabama public memory to investigate how these myths are being propagated today. We are not focusing on whether these myths are “true” or not, but rather how they are being presented as truth. So our focus will be on how major stories from Alabama’s past are being presented strategically to preserve the myths. We will start by identifying Alabama myths, and then will chose a specific few to focus on. It is beyond the scope of our project to find and analyze all myths of public memory in Alabama. Then we will find every version of these myths to analyze how the narrative is continually being presented to the Alabama public. There will be some focus on the body of scholarship defining public memory as well as the historical research of the myths. But the largest part of this project will be archival research into local newspapers and websites that all tell and retell the narrative of these myths.

If this RCEU project, and Dr. Sears’ RCEU project on “Alabama Myths & Public History” are both chosen and funded, then Dr. Sears and I will work collaboratively with our RCEU students to select specific myths that her student will research the historical origins of to account for what is historically accurate and what is not. My student will focus on the same narratives from when they become myths to current day narratives that are acting as public memory. If we are able to work in tandem, the scope and outcomes of both of our RCEU projects will be magnified.

## II. Student Duties, Contributions, and Outcomes

### a. *Specific Student Duties*

Student will be focused on finding the most current version of 3-4 significant Alabama stories, and then tracing them backwards through time through historical and narrative research to see where fictional elements were added.

### b. *Tangible Contributions by the Student to the Project* (10% of Review)

For this specific project, the student is contributing the vast majority of the work. For goals of a conference presentation and a publication beyond this RCEU project, the student’s work will support the professor’s larger claims in an invaluable way to make the student second author.

### c. *Specific Outcomes Provided by the Project to the Student* (30% of Review)

The student will come away with in-depth researching skills in both history and literature, in public memory, and in rhetoric. All of these will translate very well into classes the student has left to take as a Communication Arts major. And I foresee several conference presentations and graduate school in this student’s future.

## III. Student Selection Criteria

## RCEU 2023 Project Proposal

Junior or senior standing in a major within the College of Arts, Humanities, & Social Sciences preferred. Experience writing papers including historical research also preferred. No course prerequisites.

### **IV. Project Mentorship**

*(30% of Review)*

We will have weekly Zoom meetings to discuss progress, and any obstacles in the way. And should Dr. Sears' project get approved as well, we will occasionally work in tandem with both students on preliminary readings to set them up right for the project and to make sure everyone is on the right track moving forward. I will be working with my student one-on-one mostly, and would just be working with Dr. Sears and her student at strategic parts of the summer.