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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS





## History Professor Named Teacher of the Year

Each year, the Mississippi Humanities Council's Humanities Teacher Awards recognize the contributions of humanities faculty at each of the state's colleges and universities. This year, Dr. Westley Follett acknowledged his award with a November public lecture on his Gulf Park home campus entitled "Let's Get Medieval! A Fourteenth-Century Argument for the Liberal Arts." In his lecture, Dr. Follett discussed the contemporary issue of the value of the liberal arts within the context of his particular scholarly expertise in medieval history and the works of Italian poet Petrarch.

"Petrarch greatly esteemed the learning of Classical Greece and Rome and learning their languages, literature, philosophy, history, theater and other Liberal Arts disciplines that we now associate with the Humanities," Follett noted. "He was in fact quite a harsh critic of those in his day who questioned the continued relevance and

place of those subjects in higher education. To those in our own day who similarly question the worth of the Humanities, I point to Petrarch's argument that the Humanities are in fact timeless, and provide us with the critical tools to express, define, and understand our own lives. As Petrarch put it, the liberal arts offer remedy for 'the diseases which tear apart the soul,' and also society," Follett added.

Follett is a medievalist specializing in religious history, with emphases on monasticism, hagiography, liturgy and manuscript studies, and a geographical focus on pre-Norman Ireland. He is the author of *Celli Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages* (2006) and has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on early medieval Ireland. Follett teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in medieval, classical and world history at Southern Miss' Gulf Park campus.

Each year, the Mississippi Humanities Council honors outstanding humanities instructors from Southern Miss and other colleges and universities in Mississippi through its Humanities Teachers Awards. These awards celebrate Mississippi's humanities teachers and serve to promote the continued interest in the humanities throughout the state.

**2015** – Matthew Casey, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of History

**2014** – David Holley, Ph.D.  
Professor of Philosophy

**2013** – Jameela Lares, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

**2012** – Marie Danforth, Ph.D.  
Professor of Anthropology

**2011** – Andrew Haley, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor of History