

Bio | B. Brian Foster, Ph.D.

B. Brian Foster, Ph.D. is a writer and sociologist from Mississippi. He earned his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and currently works as Assistant Professor of Sociology and Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi.

Professor Foster studies neighborhood change and economic development in rural contexts, especially communities that have historically been home to Black Americans. His work also gives voice to the cultural traditions that Black communities have established, maintained, and adapted in the face of the rampant, often violent, changes around them. In his new book, *I Don't Like the Blues: Race, Place, and the Backbeat of Black Life*, Professor Foster takes this research agenda to the Mississippi Delta. The book follows black residents of Clarksdale as they navigate the on-the-ground impacts of substantial demographic restructuring in the Delta region, and as they make sense of the town's attempt to use blues and heritage tourism as a tool to rebuild the town's economic infrastructure.

At the University of Mississippi, Professor Foster teaches courses on race, place, storytelling, and sociological research methods. His teaching has been supported by the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College, and his courses are among the most popular in several campus departments. In 2020, Dr. Foster was named the University of Mississippi's Teacher of the Year by the Mississippi Humanities Council.

Professor Foster has also built an impressive portfolio of public sociology and storytelling ventures. He currently serves as the Director of the Mississippi Hill Country Oral History Collective and, along with his UM colleague Dr. James "JT" Thomas, is the incoming co-editor of the journal *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*. His public writing has appeared in local, regional, and national outlets, including *Oxford Magazine*, *Mississippi Folklife*, *Bitter Southerner*, *Gravy*, *CNN*, and *Washington Post*.