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Florida Lecture Series begins 2011-2012 season

LAKELAND, Fla. (September 13, 2011) — Florida Southern College’s Lawton M. Chiles Jr. Center for Florida History presents its 2011-2012 Florida Lecture Series with six guest speakers, beginning September 22 and concluding March 29. All programs will be held at 7:00 p.m. on the Florida Southern Campus in Lakeland and are free and open to the public.

“Once again, we are extremely pleased to bring the Florida Lecture Series to our students, faculty, and friends in Lakeland and the greater Tampa Bay area. This year’s series promises to be one of our finest,” noted James M. Denham, Director of the Lawton M. Chiles Jr. Center for Florida History and FSC history professor.

Sept. 22: Orville Vernon Burton
Distinguished Professor of Humanities, Clemson University

“The Age of Lincoln: Then and Now”

Abraham Lincoln’s presidency and the decades surrounding it comprised one of the nation’s most bloody and turbulent periods. Still, the conflict ultimately produced a unified nation that rests proudly on the foundation of personal liberty for *all* of its citizens. Through his efforts to expand the Founding Fathers’ incomplete view of freedom, Lincoln helped create a country that more closely resembles the ideal of “liberty and justice for all.” Vernon Burton will bring this era to life through a dynamic discussion of the impact of Lincoln’s life and legacy. Burton’s lecture will be derived from his latest book, *The Age of Lincoln*, (2007), which won the *Chicago Tribune* Heartland Literary Award for Nonfiction.

A native of Ninety-Six, South Carolina, Burton is one of America’s leading scholars of Southern History, the Civil War, and the Civil Rights movement. He earned his doctorate in 1976 from Princeton University, and soon thereafter joined the faculty at the University of Illinois where he taught for over 33 years. He has authored or edited 16 books and over 180 articles, including his classic work, *In My Father’s House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina*, (1985).

Oct. 6: Frank Laumer
Author/Historian, Dade City, Florida

“Soldiers, Seminoles, and Slavery: Florida and the Second Seminole War”

Frank Laumer knows Florida’s history down to the bone – literally. He personally exhumed and examined the bones of Ransom Clark, one of only two survivors of the first battle of the Second Seminole War. Laumer studied the bones to confirm Clark’s tale of heroic courage wherein he was shot five times before crawling 50 miles over three days to report the dreadful news. For

nearly 50 years, Laumer has devoted himself to conducting this kind of in-depth analysis of the battle, which sparked the longest Indian war in U.S. history.

Frank Laumer, an amateur historian published *Massacre!* (1968)—the first full length account of Maj. Francis Langhorne Dade’s fateful battle with the Seminoles, which occurred on December 28, 1835. But nearly thirty more years of research and sifting of evidence convinced Laumer that the full story had not yet been told. Finally in 1995 Laumer published *Dade’s Last Command*, a work commended as definitive by leading authorities in the field. Laumer’s most recent book is *Nobody’s Hero* (2008), a novelized account of Ransom Clark’s experience.

Nov. 17: **Hon. John Antoon II**
Judge, U.S. District Court, Middle District of Florida.

“American Courts: State and Nation”

The Honorable John Antoon II will draw from his vast experience with the legal system to address what he considers to be the most significant issues facing today’s courts. Among the topics he will address will be the importance of maintaining the judiciary’s freedom from political influences. Attendees will have the unique opportunity to engage with a premier legal expert and gain an insider’s perspective on the American judicial system.

A native of Cocoa, Florida, the Hon. John Antoon earned his bachelor’s degree from Florida Southern College (1968) and his law degree from the Florida State College of Law (1971). Judge Antoon’s nearly forty year career in the law has provided him with a unique opportunity to view the courts from a variety of perspectives. Prior to his nomination to the federal court by President Clinton in 2000, Antoon served as city prosecutor, private practitioner, public defender, Circuit Judge of the Eighteenth Judicial Circuit of Florida, 1985-1995, and Judge on the Fifth District Court of Appeal of the State of Florida, 1995-2000.

Jan. 19: **Lu Vickers**
Professor, Tallahassee Community College

“Cypress Gardens: America’s Tropical Wonderland”

Dick Pope, the founder of one of Florida’s first theme parks, Cypress Gardens, was once called “The Man Who Invented Florida.” Creating a paradise where tourists could wander through lavish botanical gardens, gaze at southern belles lounging under tropical trees, and gasp at over-the-top water-ski shows, Pope garnered international media attention and drew countless visitors to the state. Lu Vickers will share her research on Pope’s creation, along with the rich history of the landmark attraction and the dynamic people involved in its development.

Lu Vickers earned a doctorate in creative writing from Florida State University and currently teaches English at Tallahassee Community College. In addition to her book on Cypress Gardens, Vickers is the author of *Weeki Wachee: City of Mermaids: A History of One of Florida’s Oldest Roadside Attractions*, (2007), and her acclaimed novel, *Breathing Underwater*, (2007).

Feb. 16: **Tracy Jean Revels**
Professor, Wofford College

“Sunshine Paradise: A History of Florida Tourism”

Walt Disney’s entertainment empire looms in the minds of many when they think of Florida, along with other tourism magnets such as beachside resorts, extensive nature preserves, and

numerous theme parks. This intricate and inextricable relationship between tourism and the Sunshine State has been thoroughly explored by Tracy Revels, author of *Sunshine Paradise: A History of Florida Tourism* (2010). Revels argues that Florida's tourism industry has immeasurably shaped the state's identity, economy, and residents. Incorporating 200 years of historical perspectives from tourists, politicians, and Floridians, Revels paints a vivid picture of the continual evolution of the state's tourism industry as it works to create the ultimate tourist haven.

A native of Madison, Florida, Tracy Revels is associate professor and chair of the history department at Wofford College in Spartanburg, South Carolina. She earned her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in history from Florida State University. Revels has written numerous essays and four books covering subjects ranging from the impact of the Civil War on Florida women to a humorous collection of stories featuring Sherlock Holmes.

March 29: Isabel Wilkerson

Professor of Journalism and Director, Narrative Nonfiction, Boston University

“The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration and the Odyssey of George Swanson Starling”

In 1945, George Swanson Starling was in fear for his life after hearing of his boss' plan to lynch him. As a result, he fled to Harlem, leaving behind his life of picking citrus fruit in a Florida grove. In doing so, Starling joined the estimated six million African Americans who left the South to seek out new opportunities in the country's northern cities. This phenomenon became known as the Great Migration. Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Isabel Wilkerson highlights Starling's story, as well as many others, in her acclaimed book, *The Warmth of Other Suns: the Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, (2010).

Isabel Wilkerson became the first African American woman to win a Pulitzer Prize in journalism when she was awarded the 1994 Pulitzer for feature writing. A celebrated journalist and former Chicago Bureau Chief of *The New York Times*, Wilkerson has lectured in Canada and Denmark and at Harvard, Emory, Princeton, and Northwestern Universities.

About the Florida Lecture Series

In its 16th year, the Florida Lecture Series at Florida Southern College is a forum that brings speakers to the FSC campus who 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.

About Florida Southern College

Florida Southern is a four-year, private, co-educational liberal arts college affiliated with the United Methodist Church. The college offers more than 40 undergraduate majors and a master of business administration degree accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Located in Lakeland, Florida, the college is home to the largest, single-site collection of Frank Lloyd Wright architecture in the world.