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Anthony Harkins

Faculty Bibliography

Department Head Communication; Professor, Department of History

I am a Professor of History and teach courses in US History, Popular Culture, American Studies and World History since 1500. My book *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon* (Oxford University Press, 2004) won the 2005 Susanne M. Glasscock Book Prize for Interdisciplinary Humanities Scholarship from Texas A&M University. *Hillbilly* draws on a wide array of popular culture genres that featured hillbilly images including literature, country music, comic strips and cartoons, films, television shows, local festivals and even the Internet to examine the evolution of one of the most pervasive and enduring icons of twentieth century American popular culture. I contend, the image and identity has served as a continually negotiated mythic space through which modern Americans have attempted to define themselves and their national identity and to reconcile the past and the present.

I have also published related articles on the hillbilly image in *Studies in American Humor*, *Appalachian Journal*, *The Journal of Appalachian Studies*, was the co-editor of the Media section of the *Encyclopedia of Appalachia* (Univ. of Tennessee Press, 2006) and served as a historical consultant on several film documentaries including *Hillbilly* (2018). My article "Colonels, Hillbillies and Fightin': Twentieth-century Kentucky in the National Imagination" appeared in the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* in 2015.

In the last few years, I have published articles in *Transfers* and *Middle West Review* that explore the origins, development and potential consequences of envisioning the great center of the nation as "the middle of nowhere" from the perspectives of both coastal commentators and self-defined "Flyover People." In particular, I investigate the impact of central transportation and communication developments (especially transcontinental passenger air travel, the interstate highway system, and television) on the changing ways Americans envisioned the cultural and geographic boundaries and intersections of the nation.

I have two other publications forthcoming. My article for the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* is on the influential career of Julian Goodman, who was born in Glasgow, Kentucky, attended WKU and went on to be president of NBC from 1966 to 1978. Goodman was a central figure in the rise of television news and a staunch defender of press freedoms in the face of Nixon administration pressures. Second, my co-edited book, *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy* (West Virginia Press, 2019), is a retort, at turns rigorous, critical, angry, and hopeful, to the long shadow J. D. Vance's *Hillbilly Elegy* has cast over the region and its imagining. But it also moves well beyond Vance's book to allow Appalachians from varied backgrounds to tell their own diverse and complex stories through an imaginative blend of scholarship, prose, poetry, and photography. Complicating simplistic visions that associate the region almost exclusively with death and decay, *Appalachian Reckoning* makes clear Appalachia's intellectual vitality, spiritual richness, and progressive possibilities.

[Books & Book Chapters](#)

[Curated On-line Scholarship](#)

[Encyclopedia Entries](#)

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