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**Biography:**

Roraig Finney is a third-year PhD student at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. An Americanist, he studies the connections between immigration politics, political economy, and political culture in the 19th and early 20th century South, under the supervision of Dr. Michael Woods. He also has interests in partisanship and political identity, the history of capitalism, and labor politics. Born and raised in the United Kingdom, he earned his BA in Religious Studies at the University of Virginia, and his MA in US Studies at University College London.

**Dissertation Abstract:**

“Strangers in Dixie’s Land: How the South Confronted the Age of Mass Migration, 1850-1924” explores the politics of immigration in the South in a period that saw the U.S. transformed by mass migration. Although large-scale migrant flows generally bypassed the South, immigration as a political issue did not.

Southerners cared about immigration because whether near or far, feared or desired, it could reshape the conditions governing their distinctive social regime. Before 1865, southern immigration politics reflected slavery’s mounting crises. Antebellum Know-Nothings, Democrats, and slave-trade revivalists all confronted, in different ways, the problems of intersectional population imbalance and intrawhite social tensions. Secession shifted attention to anticipated immigrants’ subversive potential, occasioning bitter Confederate wrangling over naturalization law—the subject of my Brooks Forum chapter. Emancipation transformed the structuring imperatives of immigration politics. From Reconstruction on, many white leaders promoted immigration to replace or discipline freedpeople. Black southerners in turn rejected this agenda as a threat to their class interests, while resisting racialized immigration discourse as an ideological threat to their political status. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a complex conjuncture of populist labor politics, the construction of Jim Crow, and the national and transnational ascent of ethnobiological racism led southern politicians into a national restrictionist “mainstream.”

Ultimately, both before and after emancipation, southerners confronted the age of mass migration as people specifically but variably situated in a distinctive regional political economy and culture—yet one whose dynamics and dilemmas were shaped by its place in broader systems and circuits.