

Instructor Bios

Emanuel Abramovits is a Mechanical Engineer with an MBA and has been a concert promoter since 2000, directly involved in many events by international artists, like Itzhak Perlman, Gustavo Dudamel, Sarah Brightman, Roger Hodgson, ASIA, Journey, Kenny G and many more. He designed and staged many original orchestral events, including an Event of the Year winner and several world premieres. He served as the Cultural Director at UNION ISRAELITA DE CARACAS from 2008 to 2019, releasing books, organizing film cycles, concerts, and art exhibits. He has been consistently teaching online and in presence across the US since 2020.

Katie Bailey received her master's in library and information science and Graduate Certificate in Archival Studies at LSU in May of 2024, and a M.A. in History also from LSU in August of 2022. She is originally from Columbus, Ohio and attended Ashland University during my undergraduate career. She graduated from Ashland in December of 2019 with a B.A. in History with a focus on 19th century U.S. history and politics, as well as archives and museums. Her dream job would be to work in a New Orleans museum or archive focusing on the city's 19th century history!

Sherry Barron is the founder and artistic director of the Academy for Cultivating Arts Baton Rouge Home School Chorus. She taught music in public schools for over 20 years and maintains a private piano studio.

Donald Beale is Director of Online Distance Learning at LSU. He has a master's degree in general humanities, done doctoral study in American literature and film, and taught English and film studies courses at LSU.

Alyson Coyle has been studying performing arts professionally for over 14 years and teaching acting for over 7 years. She received her degree in Film and Television from New York Conservatory for Dramatic Arts in 2017. She created her company Big Dreams Drama Program in 2023 that puts on original youth plays every year.

Hope DeWald graduated from LSU in 2017 and earned a B.S. in Kinesiology and teaching certificate for K-12 Health and Physical Education. She began taking photos in 2017 of her family and started her photography business in 2023. Over the last several years, she has attended photography classes with Amy Shutt and Eye Wander Photo.

Christopher Goden is a PhD student at The Ohio State University. He obtained his MA in Anthropology from LSU's Forensic Anthropology and Computer Enhancement Services Lab in 2021. Prior, he obtained his BS in Anthropology from KSU in Kennesaw, Georgia, where he worked as a Death Investigator for the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. He has been involved with over 500 forensic cases and is excited to share his knowledge of forensics with OLLI once again.

Jerisse Grantham, owner of the Jeffie Jean Dance Studio, earned her BS from LSU in education with a major in theatre and has enjoyed teaching dance for more than 30 years in the BR area and Zachary schools. She is an adjunct faculty member at Tulane University & has taught for OLLI for many years. She is certified by Dance Masters of America.

James Heath James is a highly trained certified dance instructor with a distinguished background in dance. He has dedicated his life to mastering various dance styles and nurturing the talents of aspiring dancers. Trained in the International styles of Ballroom and Latin, American style Smooth and Rhythm, Country and Swing, James continues to coach, judge and perform at the highest level. As a lifelong learner, James continually seeks opportunities to expand his student's horizons and stay at the forefront of the dance industry. He believes that if you're not growing, then you're dying. Therefore, through ongoing professional development, he stays updated with the latest trends and techniques, ensuring that students receive the highest quality instruction.

Meghan Hodges is a PhD Candidate in LSU's Comparative Literature Program. She also holds a MA of Hispanic Studies and a BA of English from the same. Meghan has taught topics in literature, screen arts, and language acquisition. Previous OLLI courses include "Louisiana and Her People in Film," "Intro to Film Discussion," and "Don Quixote of the Bayou".

Jordan Jennings is a young professional currently working in the senior living industry with a master's in psychology and mental health counseling. She currently serves as the Life Enrichment Director for a local retirement community where she spends most of her time engaging residents and helping them find a new adventure every day! She believes that you're never too old to have fun, learn something new, try something new, and go somewhere new!

Sally C Jones Retired East Baton Rouge teacher of French and some English at middle and high school levels. Earned a degree in French with a minor in English education from LSU in Baton Rouge in May 1990. I taught at Central Middle, Central High, Zachary High, and Northeast High until I retired in 2010. I have taught many Olli classes since then.

Kirk Kleinpeter is a Certified NRA and USCCA Firearms instructor, USPSA and IDPA competitive Handgun Shooter. Range Safety Officer with NRA, USCCA, USPSA and IDPA.

Linda Lightfoot is retired from The Advocate where she worked 42 years, the last 15 as executive editor. This is the 30th guest speaker class she has done for OLLI on issues of importance in Louisiana. She has a B.A. degree in journalism and political science from Ole Miss.

Sue Lockwood is a retired teacher, a graduate of LSU, and she enjoyed teaching elementary education for 30 years. A student of yoga for many years, she received her 200-hour training at Barsana Dham Ashram in Austin, Texas through the Living Yoga Program. The practice of yoga, unifying body, mind, and breath is so important to our overall health.

Bridget May, PhD, FIDEC is Professor Emeritus, Marymount University, taught Interior Design history and research for many years. She coauthored 3 textbooks on the history of interiors and has published and presented on various topics in interior design history. After retiring she returned to Baton Rouge. Bridget is an avid genealogist; Bridget loves needlework and enjoys watching her 3 cats sleep.

Antonio Molesini is an Italian wine specialist for Republic National Distributing Company. He is a native of Cortona, Tuscany, Italy and has conducted wine tastings and wine classes at various locations in Baton Rouge for more than 20 years.

Pamela Myers is a retired extension agent with a master's degree in nutrition from LSU. During her career she taught a variety of skills and knowledge to both youth and adults. Pam learned to make ribbed baskets from a coworker 30 years ago and went on to learn other styles on her own. She taught her first basketmaking class for OLLI in 2017, and she makes baskets for gifts, donations and her own use and pleasure.

Olivia M. Pass has a PhD with a concentration in early American literature from the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. She obtained a master's in journalism and a master's in English from LSU. She taught English and journalism on the high school level for 22 years and on the university level for 27 years.

Jann Peck After 46 years of service in public school systems, I am a retired English/Spanish teacher. As the Lead ELA teacher in a Houston school, I had the great fortune to attend a Summer Writing Workshop with Baylor University, which ignited my love of writing. In the Charlotte Mecklenburg school system as a coordinator for 31 middle school Language Arts/English programs, I taught teachers in all subject areas how to teach writing at different grade levels and in different content areas. My emphasis on argumentative writing for 8th graders, Juniors, and Seniors prepared to-be-graduates for their Senior Projects, part of the graduation requirements. The 9-week course embraced diverse social issues, lively discussions, informal debates, research, writing, visual aids, basically resulting in a TedTalk. Argumentation is part of our lives and always will be. So, let's take a peek at how to "argue" effectively.

Rick Pitcher has had a lifelong interest in the music, history, and culture of Louisiana. He previously taught OLLI courses on New Orleans jazz and Louisiana music.

Lee Brandt Randall is an artist, illustrator, and arts educator residing in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. For over 30 years, Lee taught Studio Art and Art History to high school students. In her spare time, Lee is the costume designer for the legendary Krewe of Yazoo Precision Lawnmower Drill Team whose members refer to her as the "MacGyver of Rubber Foam."

Darlene Reaves has a master's degree in science teaching from the University of New Orleans. She has taught geology, environmental science, and wildlife biology at the New Orleans Center for Science and Math. Her passions include teaching courses and taking courses. Since 2009 Darlene has taught 13 OLLI courses in a variety of topics. She also has taken numerous online edX courses including The Science and Practice of Yoga and Poetry in America: Modernism.

Katherine Robinson majored in psychology and anthropology at the University of Vermont. She did graduate training in mental health counseling and is certified by the McLean Meditation Institute (AZ) and the Yoga Body Institute. She has recently been certified as a Brain Longevity Specialist by the Alzheimer's Research & Prevention

Foundation. Her passions are teaching meditation, breathwork and energy techniques to calm the body, exploring the healing vibrations of sound, and motivating and inspiring others to be the best that they can be.

Martha Robson is an ACBL-certified Best Practices Teacher. She has taught the OLLI bridge classes for Lagniappe since 2018. She learned bridge as a child and began playing avidly when she retired about ten years ago. She started developing her online teaching skills last year and taught her first online OLLI class this spring. Most of the kinks are worked out, but it's an ongoing adventure.

Jane Simmons is a graduate of Tulane University with a master's degree from LSU. She is a certified yoga instructor who obtained her certification through the Living Yoga program in Austin, TX. She has attended other training and workshops in NYC, CA, and Portugal. Jane has been an OLLI instructor for many years and endorses yoga as one of the all-time best ways to maintain strength, flexibility, and balance.

Dr. Stephenie Slahor holds a PhD degree and J.D. degree and is retired from her law practice, as well as university and law school teaching. She now creates informative and enjoyable OLLI courses for universities around the nation, primarily in the natural sciences and about places in our world significant for their geology, environment, or history.

Grace Thompson is a wife, mother and local resident artist who has been serving the community and sharing her faith through various art forms throughout her life. Since 2010, she has travelled around to various locations to instruct adults and children in art classes, art camps and step-by-step paint parties. She also paints commissioned artwork, murals, and does window art painting and live event speed painting. She is excited to now offer creatives the opportunity to come to her brand-new art space, Creative Hub Central, for their birthdays, classes, and special events. Located in Central, Creative Hub Central recently opened in October 2023.

Taylor Thompson has an M.A. in English and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at LSU. Her primary areas of study include rhetoric, history of English, journal studies, and medieval literature. Taylor enjoys teaching courses related to the exploration of language and human experience across centuries and cultures.

Dr. Emily Toth, PhD from Johns Hopkins, wrote her dissertation on Kate Chopin and found a lifelong interest. She has published the definitive biography of Chopin, two books of academic advice, a novel, and seven other books.

Dr. Francis W Vanderwall has been a retreat director since 1973 and a professor of Theology for many years. His M.Div. and Ph.D. are in the areas of Christian Spirituality and the Psychology of Religion. He received his degrees from The Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley and the Graduate Theological Union.

Sandra Zaid is a bilingual teacher and fine artist with a minor degree in History of Art. She graduated from Kutztown University of PA and has experience teaching elementary-level children and older adults. Her small-scale abstract paintings and tutorials: visit:

<https://www.instagram.com/kiupizaid/>