

Instructor Biographies | Fall 2023

Emanuel Abramovits is a mechanical Engineer with a master's in Business Administration. He has been a concert promoter since 2000, directly involved in many concerts by international artists, like Itzhak Perlman, Gustavo Dudamel, Sarah Brightman, Roger Hodgson, ASIA, Journey, Kenny G and many more. He has designed and staged many original orchestral events. Emanuel 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.

Ernest Ayo received his RN from LSU, his CRNA from Missouri State University, and his Pharmacist P.D. from UL Monroe.

Katie Bailey is currently earning a master's degree in Library and Information Science and master's certificate in Archival Studies. She is also the graduate assistant for her department. She received her M.A. in History from LSU in August of 2022. Katie is originally from Columbus, Ohio and attended Ashland University during her undergraduate career. She graduated from Ashland in December of 2019 with a B.A. in History.

Agnes Bickham is a Yoga Alliance ERYT with 1,000+teaching hours. She received her Yoga Teacher Certification from Shambhava/Konalani Ashram School of Yoga in Kona, Hawaii. She has practiced and taught Hatha Yoga at various studios and venues in Baton Rouge and surrounding areas. Agnes teaches yoga as a stabilizing practice that grounds students while promoting a sense of well-being, strength, confidence, balance, and joy.

Henry Bradsher has ranged across the world as a foreign correspondent and across scholarly subjects as an avid reader and researcher (when not playing tennis).

Gaines Foster received a Ph.D. in history from the University of North Carolina and then came to teach at LSU. He has taught US history, southern history, and Civil War memory for over 40 years, with some of those years devoted to administrative duties.

Dr. Matthew Calamia is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology at LSU. He has a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the University of Iowa. He conducts research on healthy cognitive aging and neurocognitive disorders and received the 2021 Early Career Award from the National Academy of Neuropsychology. He is the Director of the LSU Psychology Services Center and provides direct services to those with neurocognitive disorders in private practice at Jefferson Neurobehavioral Group.

Dr. Erica Daigle is a native of Louisiana and received her BS in Biological Sciences and MA in English from LSU. Her PhD work at the University of Iowa focused on English Renaissance literature (especially Shakespeare) and the history of Western medicine. Erica has taught OLLI courses on Shakespeare, world mythology, literature and mythology on film, and various topics from Renaissance literature.

Pat Drackett is the Director of Mississippi State University's Crosby Arboretum in Picayune, MS, and an associate extension professor of landscape architecture. She holds degrees in botany and landscape architecture and practiced for two decades as a landscape designer. Pat promotes methods of garden design and landscape management that will work in conjunction with ecological processes.

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

David Howson has a BS in secondary education from LSU (1977) and an MBA from UNO (1992). After 40 years in the marine industry, he began to pursue his passion for South Louisiana culture and cuisines by creating and publishing a website First...You Have a Beer.com in 2018. In 2021, he founded Le Bon Papa Seasonings, a company that offers his own branded seasonings.

Meghan Hodges is a Ph.D. student in Comparative Literature at LSU, where she also earned a master's degree in Hispanic Studies and a bachelor's degree in creative writing. She will earn her Ph.D. in 2025. Meghan has previously taught courses on the Spanish language, world cinema, and southern studies, and she will begin teaching world literature from 1500 to the present at LSU. Meghan joined the OLLI program in spring of 2022 and is excited to return for the summer session!

Pat Heurtin is a retired H & PE Teacher/Coach of 24 years with a master's degree plus 30 hours with an emphasis in Health Education. She is also retired from the National YMCA after serving as Physical Director of the Lake Charles YMCA. As pertaining to Pickleball, Pat has taught literally hundreds of beginning and intermediate players of all ages. She carries the Instructor Qualification from Third Shot Sports.

Board-certified family physician, retired from active practice in Baton Rouge, **Trent James** serves as a medical director and a contractor in quality patient care and patient safety for Kepro, a nationwide population health management company for government and commercial clients. He is involved in camellias, recording oral histories for the T. Harry Williams Oral History Center in LSU Libraries, historic preservation, Louisiana medical history, and an occasional docent at the LSU Rural Life Museum.

Robyn Johnson, Physical Therapist with 24 years of outpatient orthopedic experiencing. Robyn is a graduate of University of Oklahoma and is currently the Clinic Director of PhysioFit Physical Therapy.

Sandra Johnson is a retired teacher with the St. Tammany school system. She taught for 40 years in both junior and senior high schools, both biology and environmental science. Her last years of teaching were at Slidell High and Mandeville High. Sandra has a master's in education from University of New Orleans with a minor in special Ed. Her hobbies are travel, gardening, nature walks and playing cards.

Julie Hunt-Juneau RYT 200. Yoga Instructor since 2012; Yoga Alliance Certified 2016. Additional certifications include Breath Coach, Yoga for PTSD, Aerial Yoga, Gravity Yoga. Owner of Yoga by Water studio in Slidell; classes offered: Slow Flow, Yin, Chair, Meditation, Gravity, Restorative, and Aerial.

Owen Kemp has been a yoga instructor for many years and received her training through the Living Yoga program at the Barsana Dham Ashram in Austin, TX. She attended training sessions at the Omega Institute in Rhinebeck, NY, and various venues around the country and internationally. Owen's style is best described as "flow."

Michael Kinnicutt graduated from Harvard College with a degree in Middle Eastern history. His career has spanned more than thirty years in the fields of journalism, public relations, and corporate communications, including a decade with one of the world's largest pharmaceutical companies. He has

lived in European countries, including Belgium, France, and Italy, for a number of years and is fluent in French and Italian.

Linda Lightfoot is retired from The Advocate where she worked for 42 years, the last 15 as executive editor. She has put together 27 guest speaker classes for OLLI on issues important to Louisiana. She has a BA degree in journalism and political science degree from the University of Mississippi.

Merrie Lee Logan, originally from Iowa, attended The University of Iowa and La Universidad Iberoamericana, before graduating from LSU with a degree in Spanish, French, and English. She taught in public and private high schools for twenty years before joining OLLI.

Dr. Edwin Lyon retired from a career as an archaeologist and historian with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in New Orleans. He received his PhD in history from LSU. He taught Mississippi River courses at night at Tulane University. He worked as a cruise speaker on the Mississippi River for two seasons. His most memorable visit to an archaeological site was going inside Menkaure's Pyramid, the third pyramid on the Giza Plateau in Egypt.

Marchita Mauck is a retired Professor of Art History at LSU. She has her Ph.D. degree in Medieval Studies from Tulane University. Visiting Professor at Yale University, Notre Dame University, and Chicago Theological Graduate Union. Has served as a Liturgical Design Consultant for new church and church renovation projects throughout the US. Interest in modern art and architecture and art quilting.

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 and registered dietician with a master's degree in Nutrition from LSU. She has taught fitness classes focusing on strength training for 14 years, as part of her job and in retirement. Pam learned to make 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.

Ken Nelson has a BS Degree in Chemical Engineering from Illinois Institute of Technology. During his 31 years with Dow Chemical, he was superintendent of numerous hydrocarbon plants and worked on coal gasification plant design. He led a 12-year program that evaluated over 500 energy conservation and waste reduction projects. He retired in 1993 as U.S. Area Manager of Energy Conservation, founded Kentec Inc. and became a consultant to the U.S. Department of Energy.

Melissa Palfrey earned her BFA degree in college from the Savannah College of Art and Design. Over the past 10 years she has been educating herself with wine industry knowledge as she developed a passion for wine and food pairing. After years in fashion retail management, she transitioned to the wine and liquor industry in 2019, beginning her career at Martin Wine Cellar. Melissa is the General Manager of the Baton Rouge store on Moss Side Lane. Through Martin Wine Cellar, she has gained an extensive knowledge of wine and liquor through educational seminars, weekly wine tastings, and continued self-education.

Dr. Olivia Pass received her PhD from the University of Louisiana, Lafayette. She has two master's degrees from LSU--in English and journalism. She enjoys teaching and taking OLLI classes.

Sue Potts received a BS, Masters, and Educational Specialist in education from LSU. She retired after teaching history for 40 years. Since retirement, Sue has worked as a city guide for Visit Baton Rouge and the riverboats, the Old Governor's Mansion, the Old State Capitol, and the current Governor's Mansion. She has also taught classes through OLLI.

Lee 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 and has taught geology, environmental science, and wildlife biology at the New Orleans Center for Science and Math. She has taken the yoga classes for over 40 years and has recently taken the online EdX courses The Science and Practice of Yoga from the University of Texas, Arlington and The Science of Happiness from the University of California, Berkeley.

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 J. Robson loves to play bridge! She plays at the bridge club in Metairie, and she spends way too much time playing on-line. She also believes that playing bridge is one of the best things you can do for your brain, and she loves helping people learn how to approach this complex and fascinating game. She is a certified ACBL Best Practices Teacher, and she is currently exploring the world of on-line teaching.

Ralph Schomburg has a BS in Math and an MBA in Finance. He worked for NASA in Houston, TX and retired as Assistant CFO of the Johnson Space Center. He taught part-time at San Jacinto College as a math instructor and is an avid bridge student and enthusiast.

Jane Simmons is a certified yoga instructor who obtained certification through the Living Yoga Program in Austin, TX 17 years ago. She has been teaching yoga privately and to groups since that time and has been teaching for OLLI for years. She endorses yoga as one of the all-time best means of maintaining strength, flexibility, and balance.

Versa Stickle has degrees in English and Library Science and loves writing. She enjoys encouraging and helping others to discover and tell their life stories.

Dr. Emily Toth got her Ph.D. from Johns Hopkins University, where she wrote her dissertation on Kate Chopin. She's since published five books on Chopin, including the definitive biography, Unveiling Kate Chopin. Her other six books include a prize-winning historical novel, a biography of Grace Metalious, and two Ms. Mentor academic advice books. She was the first Robert Penn Warren Professor at LSU, where she taught for 25 years.

David Treppendahl majored in history at the US Naval Academy. His fascination with history has endured throughout his life. The top six commanders were chosen for their ability to see the big picture,

anticipate what the enemy would do, and play the long game to win. Of the six, he endeavors to convince the class that Andrew Jackson's defeat of the British in New Orleans was one of the most masterful feats of generalship in human history.

Dr. Francis Vanderwall is a retired professor emeritus from Franciscan University. He taught in university systems for over 40 years in various states. He is a theologian, psychologist of religion and spiritual director who led retreats nation-wide for many years. He was a Jesuit for almost 30 years.