

CHARITY RAKESTRAW

Manager, Instructional Faculty

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<https://learnwithcharity.com>

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Experienced academic product owner, instructional designer, and project manager with 7 years of progressive leadership experience managing complex projects across cross-functional teams. Skilled in leading remote teams, product design and management, and analyzing data for equitable solutions.

EDUCATION

M.Ed., Instructional Design Western Governors University, August 2019

Ph.D., History University of Alabama, Department of History, 2009

M.A., University of Alabama, Department of History, 2005

B.A., Berry College, Department of History, 2003

CURRENT POSITION

Western Governors University

Manager, Instructional Faculty, Composition, 2026-present

- Coordinates, supervises, coaches, and evaluates a team of composition faculty members
- Analyzes course and faculty KPIs and uses student outcome data to continuously improve instructional practices
- Innovates and scales instruction for an average enrollment of 2,000 learners
- Collaborates across organizations (curriculum development, evaluation and assessment, student success, college partners) to problem-solve for individual and collective student needs

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Western Governors University

Lead Program Development Owner, General Education, 2022-2026

- Designs, develops, and continuously improves curriculum and assessments for diverse learners in competency-based online programs
- Makes data-driven decisions based on learner outcomes, LMS analytics, and stakeholder inputs
- Leads matrixed teams to efficiently and effectively implement new course developments that meet quality standards and needs of executive leadership
- Solves for instructional support interventions, skills-building strategies, and user experiences that ensure equity
- Has directed design and development of curriculum and assessments for courses in Technology and Ethics, Systems Thinking, Design Thinking, Research Methods, Human Growth and Development, Global Arts and Humanities,

Physical and Human Geography, Native Histories, Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Sociology, US History, US Politics and Constitution, World History, General Physics and Lab, General Chemistry and Lab

Manager, Instructional Faculty, Social Sciences and Humanities, 2017-2022

- Managed faculty of undergraduate and graduate courses including Survey of US History, Survey of World History, World History: Diverse Cultures and Global Connections, Introduction to Geography, History of the Pacific Northwest for Educators
- Coordinated, supervised, coached, and evaluated a team of history and geography faculty members
- Analyzed course and faculty KPIs and uses student outcome data to continuously improve instructional practices
- Served as lead subject matter expert and subject matter expert-director for World History and US History, creating competencies and objectives and steering learning resource construction
- Collaborated across organizations (curriculum development, evaluation and assessment, student success, college partners) to problem-solve for individual and collective student needs

Project Manager, General Education Program Development, 2015-2017

- Managed multiple course development and redesign projects simultaneously for Social Sciences, Sciences, Math, and Communication curriculum
- Engineered and operationalized ADDIE-based course development and design process with cross-functional team of subject matter experts (including faculty), instructional designers, assessment developers, learning technologists, and external vendors
- Discovered and implemented efficiencies in course development process and provided risk analysis and mitigations

Course Mentor, General Education Social Sciences, 2011-2015

- Taught Themes and Applications in U.S. and World History, Survey of U.S. History, Survey of World History, Introduction to Geography, U.S. History to 1865, U.S. History since 1865, World History to 1500, World History since 1500
- Program Development Specialist, Survey of U.S. History and Survey of World History, 2013- 2015
 - Instructor lead for course design, development, and redevelopment projects, organizing faculty colleagues in writing and rewriting curriculum in partnership with program development and vendors

Stephen F. Austin State University

Adjunct Faculty, Department of History, 2008-2011

- Taught an average of four courses per semester and served as adjunct representative to faculty senate

The University of Alabama

Editor/Marketing Director Southern Historian (journal of southern history), Department of History, University of Alabama, 2005-2007

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Survey of US History and Survey of World History, Department of History, University of Alabama, 2003-2008

OTHER PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS AND TRAINING

Foundations of UX (User Experience) Design (Google, 2025)

Optimizing Diversity on Teams Certified (University of Pennsylvania, 2021)

Evolving Leader Certified (Western Governors University, 2020)

Resilience Program Trained (University of Pennsylvania, 2020)

ADKAR Change Management Trained (Western Governors University/Prosci, 2019)

Certified SCRUM Master (2016)

I have experience with the following platforms: Cognos, Confluence, JIRA, MindEdge, Office 365/SharePoint, Panopto, PowerBI, Salesforce, Soomo, SmartAuthor, Tableau, Trello, Workday

PUBLICATIONS

Books:

Ministers and Masters: Methodism, Manhood, and Honor in the Old South (Louisiana State University Press, 2011)

“The Making of the Southern Megachurch” (Louisiana State University Press, under contract).

Articles and Essays:

“Cold War Crusaders: Televangelists and the Transformation of American Christianity,” with Randi Barnes-Cox in Mark Boulton, ed., *Cold War and American Life* (Louisiana State University Press, 2023), 182-201.

“Contraband’ Women: Gender, Race, and Resistance in Union Camps,” with Kristopher Teters, in Megan Bever and Laura Mammina, eds., *American Discord: The Republic and Its People in the Civil War Era* (Louisiana State University Press, 2020), 172-186.

“Seeking Souls, Selling Salvation: A History of the Modern Megachurch,” in Stephen Hunt, ed., *Handbook of Megachurches* (Brill Publishers, 2019), 23-42.

“Sanctifying the SUV: Megachurches, the Prosperity Gospel, and the Suburban Christian,” in John Archer, Paul J.P. Sandul, and Katherine Solomonson, eds., *Making Suburbia: New Histories of Everyday America*. (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 240-258.

“A Popular Historian: A Conversation with James M. McPherson,” in Megan L. Bever and Scott A. Suarez, eds., *Historian Behind the History: Conversations with Southern Historians* (The University of Alabama Press, 2014), 46-64.

“Lakewood Church and the Roots of the Megachurch Movement in the South,” *Southern Quarterly* 50 (Fall 2012): 60-78.

“The Sacred Circle: Evangelical Ministers and Family in Antebellum Alabama,” *Alabama Heritage* 106 (Fall 2012): 16-23.

“The Basement: Foundations of Alabama’s Largest Christian Youth Movement,” *Alabama Heritage* 100 (Spring 2011): 62-64.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Student Obsession Award, Western Governors University, 2019
Contributions to Mentoring Award, Western Governors University, 2015
Contributions to Mentoring Award, Western Governors University, 2014
Dedication to Student Success Award, Western Governors University, 2013
History Department Dissertation Fellowship, University of Alabama, Fall 2008
Graduate Council Research Grant, University of Alabama, 2007
Graduate Council Fellowship, University of Alabama, 2007-2008
Frank Lawrence Owsley Memorial Scholarship, Department of History, University of Alabama, 2007
Women’s Studies Award for Research on Women Department of Women’s Studies, University of Alabama, 2005

PRESENTATIONS

“The Righteous Gemstones and the (Ab)Normalization of the Prosperity Gospel,” Southwest Popular/American Culture Association, Albuquerque, New Mexico, February 2026.

“‘Some Say He Was an Outlaw’: Larry Norman’s Anti-Establishment Influence on Christian Rock,” American Society of Church History, New York City, January 2019.

“Teaching the College Survey as a Dual Enrollment Course: A Syllabus Workshop,” Louisiana Historical Association, Shreveport, Louisiana, March 2017.

“Show and Tell: Creating Videos with Animation and Images to Make Abstract Ideas Stick,” American Historical Association, Denver, Colorado, January 2017.

“The Traditional Survey is Dead, Long Live the Survey: Refashioning the U.S. and World Survey Courses for the Twenty-First Century, A Panel Discussion,” Louisiana Historical Association, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, March 2016.

“Adventures in On-Line Courses, Distance Learning, and MOOCs,” Louisiana Historical Association Annual Meeting, Hammond, Louisiana, March 2014.

ADDITIONAL PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

I have served on the following leadership in teaching committees:

Louisiana Historical Association, Teaching History Committee (2015-2018)
American Historical Association, History Tuning Project (2015-2016)

I have refereed manuscripts for the following presses and journals:

Oxford University Press (2014, 2018)
University of Georgia Press (2017, 2018)
Southern Studies (2019)
Journal of Southern Religion (2018)
North Carolina Historical Review, (2018)
Virginia Magazine of History and Biography (2016)
Frontiers: A Journal of Women's History (2015)
Alabama Review (2014, 2015)
Culture, Society & Masculinities (2011)

My book reviews appear in the following journals:

American Historical Review
Civil War History
Alabama Review
Tampa Bay History
H-Net Reviews
The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society
The Journal of Southern History
The East Texas Historical Journal
Southern Historian

My contributions to non-refereed publications with a wide audience include:

The Huffington Post blog (2014-2018)
Religion in American History blog (2008-2016)

I have presented additional refereed presentations on topics ranging from online education pedagogy to southern religious history at the following conferences:

American Academy of Religion Southwest Annual Meeting (2013)
Texas State Historical Association Annual Meeting (2012)
Urban Historical Association (2010)
Southwest/Texas Popular Culture and American Culture Association (2010)
American Society of Church History at the American Historical Association (2009)
Alabama Historical Association (2007)

I have delivered presentations for the following events:

Western Governors University Women's History Month (2013, 2016, 2017)
Louisiana Technical Institute, Women's History Month (2016)
Western Governors University Black History Month (2013, 2014)
Western Governors University Social Science Week (2012, 2014)
Berry College Book Talk on Ministers and Masters (2013)
Western Governors University Constitution Week (2012, 2013)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Co-chair, PRIDE Owls Event Committee, WGU, 2021-2024
Historian, Clay House Restoration, African American Heritage Project, Nacogdoches,
TX, 2019-2023
Co-organizer, East Texas Lavender Prom (LGBTQIA+ youth support event), 2018-2023