

ROBYN SHAHAN SPEARS

Adjunct Instructor
University of Arkansas
Old Main 416
416 N. Campus Drive
Fayetteville, AR 72701
rsspears@uark.edu

EDUCATION

2024 University of Arkansas
PhD History

2020 University of Arkansas
MA History

2015 Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy
Certificate

1999 Brigham Young University
Bachelor's Degree in Zoology (Pre-Medicine)/Spanish minor

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2025-Present Adjunct Assistant Professor
Medical Education Program, Alice L. Walton School of Medicine
Art of Healing, History of Medicine

2025-Present Adjunct Instructor
Department of History, University of Arkansas
Health and Disease HIST 4883

2021-Present Instructor
Northwest Arkansas Institute of Religion
Foundations of the Restoration 225, Doctrine and Covenants 324, 325, Answering Gospel Questions 280

2021-2023 Teaching Assistant
University of Arkansas
American People to 1877, World Civilizations I, American People 1877 to Present

2018-2021 Research Assistant

University of Arkansas
Vietnam War, Indian Affairs, Fulbright Archives

2015-2017 Genealogy Consultant
 Private Firm
 Contractual research into family histories of private clients

2010-2011 Spanish Teacher
 Marble Valley Academy, El Dorado Hills, California

1999-2000 Technical Writer
 Xactware
 Content writer for home improvement instructions

1997-1999 Teaching Assistant
 Brigham Young University
 Organic Chemistry Lab 353, Human Anatomy Lab 220

COURSES TAUGHT

2025-Present History of Medicine
 Medical Education Program, Alice L. Walton School of Medicine

2025-Present History 4883: Health and Disease
 History Department, University of Arkansas

2024-Present Religion C 225: Foundations of the Restoration
 Northwest Arkansas LDS Institute of Religion

2024-Present Religion 280: Answering My Gospel Questions
 Northwest Arkansas LDS Institute of Religion

2023 History 2013: American People 1877 to Present
 History Department, University of Arkansas

2021 Religion C 324: Doctrine and Covenants 1-76
 University of Arkansas LDS Institute of Religion

2021

Religion C 325: Doctrine and Covenants 77-Official Declaration 2
University of Arkansas LDS Institute of Religion

PUBLICATIONS

Dissertation

Spears, Robyn Shahan. "First Latter-day Saint Women Baptized in Europe and Oceania: Ann Cottam Dawson (1785-1849) and Teri'i (ca. 1800-ca. 1860)." PhD diss., University of Arkansas, 2024.

Thesis

Spears, Robyn Shahan. "Arkansas Aprons: Food Power and Women in Arkansas, 1857 to 1891." ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, 2020.

Articles

Spears, Robyn Shahan. "The Ann Dawson Letter: The Only Extant Document by the First Female Baptized in Europe," *Journal of Mormon History* 51, no. 2 (Spring 2025): 138-146.

Spears, Robyn Shahan. "The Voice of Terii: First Latter-day Saint Female in Oceania," *Latter-day Saint Historical Studies* 24, No. 2, (Fall 2023).

Book Review

Spears, Robyn. Review of Jennifer Jensen Wallach, *Every Nation Has Its Dish: Black Bodies and Black Food in Twentieth-Century America* (University of North Carolina Press, 2019). *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 80 (Winter 2021): 505-507.

Works in Progress

Articles "We Appointed Telii Their Guardian": The First Polynesian Church School, 1844-52"

"Ann Dawson: The First and Best Claim to the 'First Female Baptised' in Europe," *Journal of Mormon History*. (under consideration)

"Ann Dawson's Conversion: 'The First Female Baptised' in Europe, *Journal of Mormon History*. (recommended to JMH by Steve Harper)

"Re-imagining Mary Fielding Smith's Miraculous Healing of the Ox"

"Arkansas Aprons: Food Power and Women in Arkansas, 1857-1891"

Books *First Latter-day Saint Women: In Europe and Oceania*

Mary Fielding Smith: Called to Endure. Co-authored with Ron Esplin

VIDEOS

2024 Robyn Spears, “Teri’i: First Female Baptized in Oceania,” Community of Christ Historic Foundation, Spring Series, [YouTube](#), Independence, Missouri/Digital.

2024 Robyn Spears, “Ann Dawson: First Female Baptized in Europe,” Community of Christ Historic Foundation, Fall Series, [YouTube](#), Independence, Missouri/Digital.

2021 “Robyn Spears--Arkansas Aprons: Food Power and Women in Arkansas, 1857-1891,” Central Arkansas Library System, [YouTube](#), Little Rock, Arkansas/Digital.

IN THE NEWS

2024 “Doctoral Candidate Spears Claims Over \$30,000 in Grants, Will Defend Dissertation in September,” [UARK News](#), Fayetteville, Arkansas.

2019 “Robyn Spears to Conclude Spring Graduate Speaker Series,” [UARK News](#), Fayetteville, Arkansas.

FAMILY HISTORY EXPERIENCE

2008-2018 Family History Consultant/Committee Leader, Redding & El Dorado Hills, California, and in Bentonville, Arkansas

2019 Graduate School Recruitment Team, History Department, University of Arkansas Exhibit Hall, RootsTech, Salt Lake City

2015 Salt Lake Institute of Genealogy Certificate, Salt Lake City, Utah

2015 Mentorship for Board of Certification of Genealogists, Shannon Terwedo, MA, Sacramento, California

AWARDS, GRANTS, SCHOLARSHIPS, & FELLOWSHIPS

2024 Travel Grant, BYU Church History Symposium, Provo, Utah

2024 Doctoral Presentation Travel Grant Award, Graduate School, University of Arkansas

2024 University Dissertation Scholarship, Faculty Development Committee, Fulbright College, University of Arkansas

2024 Gatewood Fellowship, Department of History, University of Arkansas

2023 Doctoral Research Travel Award, Graduate School, University of Arkansas

2023 Domestic Young Scholar Grant, Church History Library and Museum of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

2023 Competitive Bridge Fellowship, Gender Studies, University of Arkansas

2023 Student Travel Grant, Mormon History Association, Rochester, New York

2023 Ralph V. Turner Endowed Travel Award, Department of History, Fulbright College, University of Arkansas

2023 Dissertation Grant, Religious Education Center, Brigham Young University

2022, 2023 Doctoral Presentation Travel Grant Award, Graduate School, University of Arkansas

2022, 2023 John Whitmer Historical Association Student Scholarship

2022 Student Grant, Mormon Women's History Initiative Team, Provo, Utah

2022 Student Travel Grant, Global Mormon Studies Conference, Coventry, England

2021, 2022 Jesse Taylor Jr. Endowed Student Scholarship, Department of History, Fulbright College, University of Arkansas

2021 Walter Lee Brown Scottish Rite of Freemasonry Scholarship, Department of History, University of Arkansas

ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

Panels Organized

2025 "LDS Women and Miracles: Pioneers, 20th Century, Contemporary," with Jennifer Reeder, Chair, Holly Miller Jones and Jennifer Black presenting, Mormon History Association, Ogden, Utah

2024 "The British Mission in 1840," with Matt Rasmussen, Chair, with Elizabeth Mawlam and Naomi Krüger, Mormon History Association, Kirtland, Ohio

2023 "Ritual Practice," with Kristine Wright, Chair, with Jonathan Stapley and David Grua, Mormon History Association, Rochester, New York

Panel Chaired

2023 "Evangelism and Church Planting 'For the Express Purpose': Power, Conflict, and Positioning in the Apostolic Quorum During their First Mission (1835)," Maclane Heward, and "Restoration Tales from South Asian Trails," Nicole Isaac and Taunalyn Ford, John

Whitmer Historical Conference, Fredericksburg, Texas

Papers Presented

2025 “Re-imagining Mary Fielding Smith’s Miraculous Blessing of the Oxen,” Mormon History Association Conference, Ogden, Utah

2024 “‘We Appointed Telii Guardian’: The First Polynesian Church School, 1844-52” Church History Symposium, Provo/Salt Lake City, Utah

2024 “The Ann Dawson Letter: The Only Extant Document by the First Female Baptized in Europe,” Mormon History Association, Kirtland, Ohio

2023 “First Female Baptized in Europe,” John Whitmer Historical Association, Fredericksburg, Texas

2023 “Certain Women: Restored Administrations in England and French Polynesia, 1837-1852,” Mormon History Association, Rochester, New York

2023 “Terii: Healer, Host, Musician & Diplomat,” Church History in the Pacific and Asia Conference, Brigham Young University—Hawaii

2022 “‘Receive a Blessing’: The Global History of Women and Healing in the Early Latter-day Saint Movement,” John Whitmer Historical Association Conference Independence, Missouri

2022 “Bless the Sick: The Global History of Women and Healing in the Early Latter-day Saint Movement,” Global Mormon Studies Conference, Coventry, England

2022 “Bless the Sick: The Global History of Women and Medicine in the Early Latter-day Saint Movement,” American People from 1877 to the Present, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas

2021 “Bless the Sick: Women and Medicine in Early Mormonism,” Panel with Rebecca Strain and Jennifer Pulsifer, Mormon History Association, Park City, Utah

2021 “Women of the West,” American People from 1877 to the Present, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, Arkansas

2021 “Arkansas Aprons: Women’s History and Food History in the Nineteenth Century,” Rural Women’s Studies Association Conference, Toronto, Canada/Digital

INVITED PRESENTATIONS & LECTURES

2024 “The Plan of Happiness and the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Latter-day Saint Women’s Lives,” Springfield Missouri Young Women’s Temple Trip, Bentonville, Arkansas

2024 “Research Discoveries: Ann Dawson and Terii,” Roundtable, Church History Department, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah

2024 “Dissertation Miracles,” Sunday Fireside, Sugar Creek Ward, Rogers Stake, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Bella Vista, Arkansas

2023 “Women’s Blessings of Healing,” Guest Lecturer, with Casey Griffiths, Brigham Young

University

2023 "Converted Women's Perspectives in Early Church History," Second Annual Bridge Fellows Research Roundtable, Gender Studies Program, University of Arkansas

2021 "Arkansas Aprons: Food Power and Women in Arkansas, 1857 to 1891," Central Arkansas Library Systems Conference, Little Rock/Digital

2019 "Arkansas Aprons: Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries and Food," Graduate Student Speaker Series, Special Collections, Mullins Library, University of Arkansas

CITIZENSHIP & SERVICE

2023-Present Consultant, Teri'i, Salt Lake Temple Open House, Church History Museum, Salt Lake City, Utah

2023-Present Articles Award Committee, John Whitmer Historical Association Conference, St. George, Utah

2024 New Hire Welcome Committee for African American Studies Professor, Graduate Student Representative, Department of History, University of Arkansas

2023 Family History Media Lead, Rogers Stake Family History and Temple Committee, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Rogers, Arkansas

2023 Consultant, Terii and Ann Dawson, Women's History October Bus Tour, Community of Christ, Independence, Missouri

2022 Global Mormon Studies Committee, Mormon History Association Conference, Logan, Utah

2022 Parent Perspective Review Committee, Visual & Performing Arts Handbook 2022-2023, Matthew Peoples, Bentonville School District, Arkansas

2022 New Hire Committee, Civil War Historian, Graduate Student Representative, Department of History, University of Arkansas

2014-2017 Chair, Volunteer, Coconut Club Fundraising, Music Department, Oakridge High School, El Dorado Hills, California

2005-2009 Volunteer, YMCA, Redding, California

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2023-25 Assistant Communications Director, Community Outreach and Online Presence Specialist, Rogers Stake Communications Council

2024 Inaugural Scholar, Career Exploration Conference at the Sperry Symposium, BYU Religious Education

2023 Global Women's Research, Emily Peck Deason, Young Domestic Scholar Award, Church History Department, Salt Lake City, Utah

2022 Mormon Studies Publication and Professionalization Workshop, Mormon History

1996 Association, Logan, Utah
Model United Nations, World Health Organization, Kennedy Center for
International Studies, Brigham Young University

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society
Mormon History Association
Global Mormon Studies Community
Arkansas Historical Association
John Whitmer Historical Association
Association for Genealogical Educators

LANGUAGE

Spanish