

M. Rhys Dotson

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Academic Positions

University of Texas at Tyler

Assistant Professor of History	2026-present
Assistant Professor of Instruction	2023-2026
Lecturer	2011-2023
Adjunct Faculty	2010-2011

Kilgore College

Adjunct Faculty	2009-2011
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Education

PhD	Modern American History, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX Dissertation: “Texas Pride: The Formation of Dallas’ Gay Community, 1966-2003” Advisor/Committee Chair: Albert S. Broussard Comprehensive Exam Fields: Early American History, Modern American History, History of Civil Rights, History of Women and Gender, and Women in Science (Sociology)	2022
MA	Political Science, University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX Comprehensive Exam Fields: American Politics and Comparative Politics	2014
MA	History, University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX Comprehensive Exam Fields: Modern America and Modern Europe	2009
BA	History, University of Texas at Tyler, Tyler, TX	2006

Peer-Reviewed Publications

Manuscripts

The Dallas Way: Gay Rights in a Conservative City (New York University Press, 2026).

Articles

“Hate Behind the Pine Curtain,” *The Activist History Review*, October 2017.

Book Reviews

Monica Muñoz Martinez, *The Injustice Never Leaves You: Anti-Mexican Violence in Texas* in *The Latin Americanist* 70, no. 2 (June 2026), 274-275.

Projects in Progress

“Barnstorming with the Davids”

In 1903, Benjamin and Mary Purnell established the Israelite House of David, a religious society, in Benton Harbor, Michigan, and, almost immediately, young men from the group formed traveling baseball teams. Between 1903 and 1950, the House of David outfit wowed crowds with “the art of the ‘pepper game,’ a collection of Harlem Globetrotters-esque antics.” While this alone is amusing, it is essential to note that the House of David regularly played negro league teams.

Ultimately, my research aims to explore the multiracial connections formed within the context of baseball. Through this scholarship, I believe we can gain a better understanding of the lived experiences of two marginalized groups: African Americans and members of a small, unorthodox religious sect, the House of David, prior to overt efforts at racial desegregation in American society and professional baseball.

“From the Bayou to the Beltway: The Activism and Impact of Phyllis Frye”

This paper examines the life and activism of Phyllis R. Frye, Texas’s first openly transgender judge, as a case study in the Southern origins of national transgender rights politics. Frye’s public life traces a distinct arc: her coming out as a transsexual in the 1970s, her leadership in overturning Houston’s cross-dressing ordinances in the 1980s, during which she was publicly branded a “transgender menace,” and her subsequent lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. in the 1990s, where she pushed for the inclusion of transgender protections in federal employment non-discrimination legislation.

Rather than treating these as separate chapters of a biography, this paper argues that Frye’s career functioned as a bridge between local, Southern activism and national policy debates, demonstrating that the “national” history of transgender rights cannot be fully understood without accounting for the grassroots legal and political battles fought in cities like Houston. By tracing how Frye’s tactics, credibility, and political networks moved from municipal courtrooms to Capitol Hill, this paper contributes to a broader reassessment of the U.S. South not as peripheral to transgender history, but as a formative site where transgender political strategy was first tested and refined.

Honors, Awards, and Certifications

2024 – Effective Teaching Practice Framework (certification), The Association of College and University Education and the American Council on Education

2016 – Excellence in Teaching (award), The National Society of Leadership and Success, University of Texas at Tyler

Conference Presentations and Service

“No Place to Hide: Homophobic Rhetoric, Public Space, and the Murder of Nicholas West,” The Alliance for Texas History, Fort Worth, TX, May 2026.

“It Takes GUTS: AIDS Protests in a Conservative Southern City, 1987-1990,” The Southern Historical Association, St. Pete’s Beach, FL, November 2025.

“New Waco Histories: Queer and Women’s History,” (panel chair) The Alliance for Texas History, San Marcos, TX, May 2025.

“Fighting the Pulpit: The Dallas Gay Community and Their Resistance to a Cultural Holy War,” The Texas State Historical Association, Austin, TX, February 2022.

“Fighting the Pulpit: The Dallas Gay Community and Their Resistance to a Cultural Holy War,” The Southern Historical Association, Virtual, November 2021.

“Phylis R. Frye: The Transgender Menace Who Fought for Trans Equality, 1980-2015,” World History Association of Texas, Commerce, TX, February 2019.

Interviews

Interviewed for *Queering the Lone Star State*, a history podcast about LGBT civil rights in Texas hosted by Wes Phelps, 2026.

Interviewed for “‘The Dallas Way’ charts history of how an LGBTQ community came to thrive in a conservative city,” *Texas Standard*, June 18, 2026.

Interviewed for “Years Before the Stonewall Riots, Dallas’ Queer Community Had Its Own Movement,” *The Barbed Wire*, May 27, 2026.

Interviewed for *Queering the Lone Star State*, a history podcast about LGBT civil rights in Texas hosted by Wes Phelps, 2025.

Interviewed for *Lady of the Lore*, a history podcast that asks “How did we get here?” hosted by Kelly Ornelas, 2024.

Interviewed about the history of Labor Day, KLTW (ABC affiliate in Tyler, TX), September 1, 2022.

Interviewed for “The Remarkable Story of How a Teenage Runner Battled the Legacy of R.E. Lee,” ESPN.com, October 7, 2020.

Invited Lectures

Lee-Bardwell Public Library: “Neither Crown Nor Chaos: The Constitution as America’s Goldilocks Moment,” Commemoration of America’s 250th Anniversary, Gladewater, TX, August 6, 2026.

Lee-Bardwell Public Library: “The American War for Independence,” Commemoration of America’s 250th Anniversary, Gladewater, TX, July 9, 2026.

Lee-Bardwell Public Library: “From Colonies to Conflict: The World that Made the Revolution,” Commemoration of America’s 250th Anniversary, Gladewater, TX, June 16, 2026.

Courses Taught

Undergraduate

U.S. History I
 U.S. History II
 Historical Methods and Research
 Industrial and Progressive America
 America Between the World Wars
 History of Modern America, 1932 to the Present
 America Since 1945
 History of African Americans
 History of Mexican Americans
 History of Texas
 The Long Sixties
 Modern Conservative America

Graduate

History of African Americans
 The Long Sixties
 America Since 1945

Graduate Students

Masters Thesis Committee (Member)

Michael Allen Knous, Jr., “From the First to the Last: The 70th Ohio Volunteer Infantry Regiment in the Civil War, 1861-1865” (defended April 2024)

Academic Service

University of Texas at Tyler

University Service:

Member: Commencement Committee	2023-present
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History Department Service:

Advisor: Psi Alpha Chapter, Phi Alpha Theta National Honor Society	2023-present
Member: Tenure-Track Search Committee, World Historian	2024
Member: Tenure-Track Search Committee, Early American Historian	2023

Public History, Public Education, and Community Service

Professional Development (facilitator), History Department, Tyler ISD	2024 - 2026
Professional Development (facilitator), History Department, Whitehouse ISD	2023
Professional Development (facilitator), History Department, Whitehouse ISD	2019

Professional Affiliations

Alliance for Texas History
American Historical Association
East Texas Historical Association
Phi Alpha Theta
Southern Historical Association