



Course Catalog

**Fall 2026
Sessions A and B**



Find out more at [assumptionwise.org](https://www.assumptionwise.org)

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How to Contact Us

The WISE office is located on the Assumption University campus in La Maison Française, Room 206. Our regular office hours are Monday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm. Please let us know if you have any questions or wish to discuss the program - we invite new ideas and feedback at any time.

Find us at assumptionwise.org
or visit our Facebook page

Email: wise@assumption.edu
Phone: 508-767-7513

All About WISE

The Worcester Institute for Senior Education was founded in 1993 and is an affiliate organization of the School of Graduate and Professional Studies at Assumption University in Worcester, MA.

The WISE Mission

WISE is a member-driven organization providing lifelong learning opportunities for older adults.

Our vision is to be a learning community that offers adults intellectual stimulation, socialization, personal growth, and opportunities for service.

Through peer learning concepts, members share their knowledge and experiences with each other by creating, coordinating, and participating in courses.



Be WISE and Join Now

Join WISE and you become a member of a community of lifelong learners. WISE members enjoy a variety of interesting courses together with a schedule of engaging educational and social events.

Members can enjoy performances and sports events on campus at no cost. Discounts are available when visiting Assumption University's recreation center, snack bar, and dining hall.

The WISE Classroom

Membership allows access to all courses and events. Each session, WISE offers classes both online via Zoom and in-person on the Assumption University campus. Zoom classes (and even some in-person classes) are recorded for members to access at a time that is convenient for them.

Unlimited Course Selection

A WISE membership provides adult learners with unlimited access to a compelling selection of courses. Most Fall and Spring courses consist of five 90-minute classes in a wide variety of topics such as music, art, history, technology, culture, science, nature, and more. Most courses do not overlap, allowing members to take as many classes as they choose.

Teach at WISE

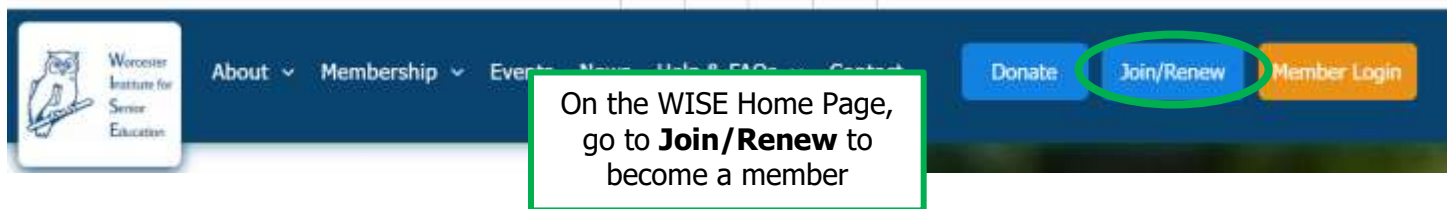
Do you have a special interest or hobby? WISE is always interested in welcoming new instructors and new topics. In addition to becoming a student, consider being a WISE instructor. For more information on teaching at WISE visit our website here: <https://assumptionwise.org/teaching>

Ready to Join WISE?

Visit the WISE website at assumptionwise.org to sign up and purchase a full- or half-year membership online.

Membership Fees for the current academic year:

Half-Year (Fall 2026 or Spring 2027)	\$185.00
Full-Year (Fall 2026 and Spring 2027)	\$365.00



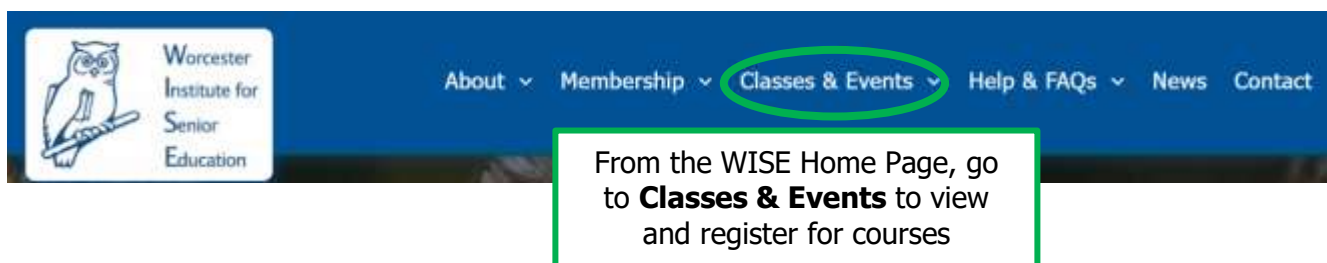
Complete the membership form, which will prompt you to pay online with your credit card. If you prefer to pay by check, send your payment to:

WISE at Assumption University, 500 Salisbury Street, Worcester, MA 01609

You can also contact the WISE office directly to start your membership. We are here to assist you with logging onto our site, setting up your WISE profile, and/or registering for classes. Send us an email at wise@assumption.edu or call 508-767-7513. We are happy to help.

How to Register for Classes

Once you are a WISE member, you can register for upcoming classes via the WISE website. Sign up for one class or all of them! You will receive a confirmation email for each course you select.



Fall 2026 Overview

Session A dates: September 14 – October 26

Session B dates: October 29 – December 16

Zoom classes: These are held online via Zoom; links are made available prior to class start

Category	No.	Title	Instructor
Music	A1	Gershwin and the American Opera Tradition*	E. McCorvey
Art History	A4	Landscape Painting: 1848-1872	M. Chiarchiaro
Music	A6	Music of the Jazz Age, 1902-1932	D. Radlauer
Religion	A7	Under-Told Stories in American Religion	K. Fisher
Music	A10	Troubadours of Folk Music	D. Nevard
Literature	A13	Becoming George Orwell	K. Hakkarainen
Politics	A14	10 Nations in the Political Grey Zone	P. Macek
Music	B1	The Beatles: Part 3	G. Shwalb
Art History	B4	Academic & Impressionist Painting: 1870-1905	M. Chiarchiaro
Religion	B7	Spiritual Vows and Social Values	K. Fisher
Politics	B10	Leftist Dreams, Soviet Graves: 1930's	K. Hakkarainen
History	B13	African American History 1620-1865	L. Morse

**Last class of A1 will be in person at a Worcester location to be announced*

In-Person classes: These are held on campus at Assumption University (unless otherwise noted)

Category	No.	Title	Instructor
Art History	A2	Topics in African Art	J. Borgatti
Science	A3	Geologic Sojourns: North America and Beyond	A. Koenigsberg
Economics	A5	Banks and Money	E. Goodwin
Art History	A8	Shakespeare's King Lear	Whall/Vaughan
History	A9	Industrial Revolution in 19 th Century New England	P. Murphy
Science	A11	Anthropology of Gender	S. Rodgers
History	A12	Military Disasters: Ancient and Modern	J. Northgraves
Religion	A15	Universalism: Belief that Everyone will be Reconciled	G. Shahinian
Economics	B2	Economics and Current Events 2026	T. Gottschang
Literature	B3	Margaret Atwood: Canada's Leading Author	M. Tannenbaum
Literature/Poetry	B5	Thomas Merton and Billy Collins: Theological Poems	T. Brennan
Culture	B6	Humor 103: From Dark to the Light with Comedy	J. Fusco
Science	B8	Dog-Human Connection: Science & Stories	J. Sifleet
Science	B9	A Brave New World? Genetic Engineering comes of Age	C. O'Connor
History	B11	100 Years Ago, 1926, America's Adolescence	Various
Law	B12	Balls and Strikes: Chief Justice John Roberts	J. Ross
Science	B14	The Science of Happiness	N. Lipsitz
Religion	B15	The Historical Jesus: 5 Views	G. Shahinian

Session A Course Descriptions

A1. George Gershwin and the American Opera Tradition

Mondays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
September 14, 28, October 5, 19, 31

Zoom

(10/31 class will
be in person;
time and location
to be announced)



Music Worcester's Artist-in-Residence Dr. Everett McCorvey will offer a 5-week class focused on George Gershwin and American Opera. With help from guest lecturers and performing artists, members will learn about the Gershwins' influence on American music as well as take a deep dive into *Porgy and Bess* and *Rhapsody in Blue*. The final class meeting will culminate with an opportunity to meet Dr. McCorvey as well as soloists participating in Music Worcester's November 1st Gershwin concert.



Instructor: Everett McCorvey is a native of Montgomery, Alabama, and a graduate of the University of Alabama where he received his degrees including a Doctorate in Musical Arts. He has given performances at the Metropolitan Opera, Kennedy Center, Radio City Music Hall, Teatro Comunale (Florence), Queen Elizabeth Hall (London), and in over 23 countries. He is the Founder and Artistic Director of the American Spiritual Ensemble, a professional ensemble dedicated to the performance and preservation of the American Negro Spiritual (www.americanspiritualensemble.com) and he is the Conductor and Artistic Director of the National Chorale and Orchestra of New York City.

A2. Topics in African Art

Mondays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
September 14, 28, October 5, 19, 26

In Person

AU Campus
Kennedy 119



This series of lectures is an introduction to African Art, its variety of forms, the depth of its history, and how it became important in Western culture and the global world. There is a loose order to these talks, and reading will be suggested for those wanting to delve more deeply into the topics. We will cover African Art from its earliest periods through contemporary; beginning with Rock Art, Black Egypt (Nubia), and the medieval world when Africa was part of world trade networks through the Trans-Saharan trade routes and the Indian Ocean trade. We will look at masquerade - an important art form in Africa - and examine African sculpture's links to Western modernism. We will end with a consideration of forms from the Black Atlantic world. An optional walk through the Fitchburg Art Museum's current exhibition Festival with curator Jean Borgatti will cap the series. Entrance to the Fitchburg Art Museum is free.

Suggested reading: *African Art in Detail*, Christopher Spring, Harvard University Press, 2010; ISBN-10: 0674036220; ISBN-13: 978-0674036222

The Bright Continent, Open-source on-line text by Kathy Curnow, emeritus professor Cleveland State University.

Downloadable as a pdf (free) at https://www.academia.edu/50969635/Bright_Continent_African_Art_History

A History of Art in Africa, 2nd edition. Monica Visona et al. 2008. Pearson/Prentice Hall. Text only is available on-line at https://uknowledge.uky.edu/art_textbooks/1/



Instructor: Jean Borgatti has been consulting curator of African and Oceanic art at the Fitchburg Art Museum since 2010, and helped organize and document a growing collection of African and Oceanic art and developed a long-term exhibition of the collection. She has faculty status at Clark University where she taught between 1984 and 2004 in the Visual and Performing Arts Department, and at Boston University where she has been a research fellow at the African Studies Center. She received her B.A. in Art History (Modern Art) from Wellesley College in 1966, and her M.A. and PhD in Art History (Non-Western Art) from UCLA in 1971 and 1976 respectively. She has carried out extensive research in Nigeria in 1971-1974 (doctoral research), 1979 (post-doctoral research) and as a Fulbright scholar between 2002-2004 as well as 2014-2016. She has organized several major exhibitions at FAM (Global Africa--2014-2018, Moving Objects-- 2018-2024, Africa Rising 2024-2025 and Festival - current through Dec. 13, 2026).

A3. Geological Sojourns: North America and Beyond

Mondays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
September 14, 28, October 5, 19, 26

In Person
AU Campus
Kennedy 119



Join me for detailed lectures on the geology of various places I have visited, including Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, Yellowstone, Arizona, Utah, and Iceland:

Week 1: Geology of Southern Alberta - Glaciers to Dinosaurs

Week 2: The Cascades - Crater Lake to St. Helens

Week 3: Yellowstone National Park - the Super Volcano to Old Faithful

Week 4: Geology of the Hawaiian Islands - Kilauea to Haleakalā

Week 5: Central Iceland - Laugavegur – A Geological Trek from the Icelandic Highlands to the Sea



Instructor: Andy Koenigsberg has a BA in Geology from Cornell University and an MS in Geology from the University of New Orleans. He started his career as a petroleum geologist in the early 1980s. He switched over to environmental and engineering geology after moving to Massachusetts in 1986, and worked on several Superfund Remediation projects. Along the way, Andy specialized in hydrogeology which encompasses the interaction of soils and rock with hydrologic processes. Andy taught hydrogeology at UMass Lowell and Tufts University. He has given lectures to various organizations, led numerous geology field trips, and run workshops on hydrogeology and wetlands for the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions. Andy still works part-time as a hydrogeologist. He lives in Westborough with his wife Robin.

A4. Landscape Painting 1848-1872

Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
September 15, 22, 29, October 6, 13

Zoom



We will chronologically explore artists and their styles in Europe and America between the European Revolutions of 1848, and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. With the creation of the first collapsible tin tube of paint in 1841, en plein air (out-of-door) landscapes became a focus for the Barbizon and the Hudson River School artists. We'll compare and contrast the landscape paintings of the French artist Corot, Millet, and Daubigny with those of the Americans Durand, Kensett, and Inness. The impact of the Realism of Courbet and Homer will be examined. The early academic works of Gerome and Bouguereau will contrast with the early works of Monet, Renoir, and Degas. We will also touch upon the impact of the first several Universal Expositions held in London and Paris in the dissemination of new European and American painting styles.



Instructor: Martha Chiarchiaro has brought history to life through the art of the times for more than 30 years. She received her Master's degree in History of Art from Williams College and teaches a variety of art history courses at the Worcester Art Museum and other local cultural organizations. Her specialty courses related to specific periods, artists, and activities provide a more in-depth look at the life and times of the people who are part of the exploration. Martha is looking forward to sharing her enjoyment of mid-19th century painting.

A5. Banks and Money Reshaping the cabbage, lobster and cheese: Folly or Genius? Tuesdays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. September 15, 22, 29, October 6, 13	In Person AU Campus Kennedy 119 
Money plays a very powerful role in the way societies are organized and how economies are organized. This course provides an overview of banks and money. We will learn about the folly or genius of innovations both old and new: how money may be reshaped, implications and challenges, what reshaping may mean to you, and how the reshaping of money is quietly becoming a significant part of our daily lives.	
	Instructor: Edward Goodwin earned degrees at Northeastern University-MS Criminal Justice; Nichols College-MBA; and the College of the Holy Cross-BA; and American Bankers Association Certified Regulatory Compliance Manager designation. Edward was a Bank Compliance and Bank Secrecy Act Anti Money Laundering Officer for domestic banks and an international division of a world-wide bank with subject matter expertise in bank regulatory compliance and financial crimes. He administered, reviewed, instructed, and advised senior management on all federal or state bank compliance regulations and audits. Eddie directed Bank Secrecy Act and Anti Money Laundering efforts relative to financial crimes mitigation and reporting efforts with U.S., state, and local law enforcement and regulatory agencies.

A6. Music of the Jazz Age, 1902-1932 Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. September 15, 22, 29, October 6, 13	Zoom 
America's most original art form launches in a time of radical transformation and upheaval. Drawing from deep cultural roots, it develops from the blues, spirituals, hymns, marches, ragtime, and dance music, triggering rapid innovations. This course explores key developments in rhythm, harmony, melody, timbre, and improvisation, celebrating the most colorful personalities of the newly emerging artform. Linked playlist and resource documents for each class offer further exploration.	
Optional reading: <i>Jazz Masters of the Twenties</i> Richard Hadlock; <i>Black Bottom Stomp</i> David A. Jasen & Gene Jones	
	Instructor: Dave Radlauer has been recounting tales of early Jazz and Swing in print, online and on the radio for 40 years, garnering six broadcast awards. His chronicles of early Jazz and massive website offer fresh perspectives on Jazz and Swing at www.JAZZHOTBigstep.com. He taught Osher Institute zoom-format classes for UC Berkeley, Dominican University, San Francisco State University and UCLA from 2022-25. Other professional qualifications include authoring 200 articles, webpages, and columns online and in print. For Stanford Libraries, he has written interpretive articles and donated a unique jazz collection. Publications: The San Francisco Cricket, San Francisco Traditional Jazz Foundation (print & online), 1998-2014, The San Francisco Traditional Jazz Foundation, Charles M. Huggins Project, The Stanford Libraries, 2017 https://exhibits.stanford.edu/sftjf/feature/the-east-bay-sound Dagogo (audio enthusiast online magazine), 2018-2020 https://www.dagogo.com/category/the-columns/jazzed-up, The Syncopated Times (online & print monthly), 2019-2024 (https://syncopatedtimes.com/the-legend-is-true)

A7. Under-Told Stories in American Religion Wednesdays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. September 16, 23, 30, October 7, 14	Zoom 
The current Administration, through policies and practices, has proclaimed the US a “Christian Nation.” Such attempts to fuse church and state are not new. Rooted in a particular set of Protestant theological and cultural values, the movement revises America’s complex religious history into a slim volume of Christian beliefs. Most of the missing stories convey the struggles for social justice and inclusion that are also grounded in faith traditions. This course spotlights figures from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Native American communities whose spiritual wisdom is vanishing from the complex narrative of American religious identities.	
	Instructor: Kathleen Fisher has taught for WISE since 2019, offering courses in religion and spirituality through a variety of poets, philosophers, religious figures, and historical texts. She holds a Ph.D. in Medieval History and Religion from Boston University. After a long teaching career in Theology at Assumption University, Kathleen now lives in Chapel Hill, NC where she also lectures in Elon University's Life@Elon program.

A8. Shakespeare’s King Lear Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. September 16, 23, 30, October 7, 14	In Person AU Campus Kennedy 119 
Shakespeare’s <i>King Lear</i> - written between 1603 and 1605 and set in an ancient British past - continues to speak to our times. The play intertwines the stories of a dysfunctional family, an old man slipping into dementia, a seriously flawed national leader, and dangerous internal power struggles. Its themes include madness, the plight of the poor, the nature of love, the danger of deception, and the call to endure suffering until we end it. With this play Shakespeare shows the temptations of despair, yet he still dares us to hope. This course will study the tragedy of <i>King Lear</i> and its implications both when written and now.	
Required reading: <i>King Lear</i>, Folger Library edition, Simon and Schuster, ISBN-13:978-0743482769	
	Instructor: Helen Whall earned her Ph.D. in Renaissance Literature from Yale University and then taught Shakespeare and modern drama at the College of the Holy Cross. She has written on both subjects and worked as a theater reviews editor for Theater Journal. Since retirement, she has brought numerous courses to WISE, often and happily partnering with Clark Shakespearean Virginia Vaughan.
	Instructor: Virginia Mason Vaughan is Professor Emerita and Research Professor of English at Clark University, and the author of numerous works on Shakespeare. Her most recent publication, <i>Shakespeare and the Gods</i> (Arden Shakespeare, 2020), studies Shakespeare’s mythological allusions. Long known as an instructor at WISE, she taught <i>Othello</i> in the fall of 2025. She now looks forward to offering another course with her Holy Cross colleague, Helen Whall.

A9. The Industrial Revolution in 19th Century New England

Wednesdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
September 16, 23, 30, October 7, 14

In Person
AU Campus
Kennedy 119



This course will look at the 19th century development of the textile industry in New England, including the transfer of technology from the UK, the mill systems of New England, the immigrant labor to run them, and the ultimate decline and departure of the industry. We will discuss how New England was changed through the rise and fall of this industry, and the impact on our modern lives.



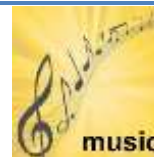
Instructor: M.E. (Pete) Murphy is a Retired Assistant Professor of Management B.A., Stevens Institute of Technology; Mechanical Engineering (1968) M.A., University of Akron; Business Administration (1985). Professor Murphy retired from teaching Management in the Business Studies Department at Assumption College in August of 2011. He came to Assumption after a long career in the international energy industry managing a variety of business and technical organizations.

"The economy determines our quality of life, good or bad. We must manage it well. Financial and business knowledge is essential for everyone to be sure that we choose the right leaders with the best ideas. My classes in WISE explore the business issues that are important to all of us today."

A10. Troubadours of Folk Music

Thursdays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
September 17, 24, October 1, 8, 15

Zoom



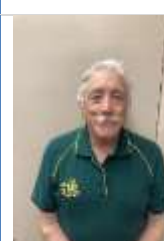
The folk music revival was a mid-20th-century cultural movement—peaking in the late 1950s through the mid-1960s—in which traditional American folk music, rural blues, ballads, work songs, and political songs were rediscovered, popularized, and transformed into a mass-audience phenomenon. This course features the singing of great troubadours like Pete Seeger, Joan Baez, and Bob Dylan - and lesser known but influential figures such as Eric von Schmidt and Ramblin' Jack Elliott. We'll dig into the origin of some folk songs, both old and original, and the "folk process" of song transmission. We'll look at centers of folk revival - Greenwich Village, Cambridge, the Newport Folk Festival - and of the Freedom movement which flourished alongside. This is a sampler from a vast subject. "Troubadours of Folk Music" is designed not just for Folk fans but for anyone who appreciates good music.

Optional reading: *Baby, Let Me Follow You Down: The Illustrated Story of the Cambridge Folk Years* by Eric von Schmidt & Jim Rooney; University of Massachusetts Press; ISBN-10: 0870239252; 1994



Instructor: David Nevard grew up in suburban Boston and has always been fascinated by history – especially World War II and the postwar era. He attended UMass-Amherst and worked as an IT professional for over 30 years. Since retirement, David has been an instructor at WISE and other lifelong learning programs. His courses include The Worcester Tornado; Suburbia; New York World's Fair; Displaced Persons after World War II; the Berlin Wall; Operation Paperclip, the Nuremberg War Crimes Trials, the Roosevelt Family, Vietnam War Songs and Stories.

A11. Anthropology of Gender Thursdays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. September 17, 24, October 1, 8, 15	In Person AU Campus Kennedy 119	
This cultural anthropology course plunges students into three cultural worlds that perceive gender and gendered persons in ways very different from our own. These three worldviews are: 1.) Zuni understandings of the two-spirit person, the lhamana, a high status and beloved religious role; 2.) views of women as polluting and dangerous from Gimi society, Eastern Highland, Papua New Guinea; 3.) Indonesian ideas about the banci, a man-woman person once thought to be close to the spirit world. We'll end the course by seeing how this cross-cultural material helps us to better discern what is going on with the current-day U.S. moral panic about trans persons. The class includes ethnographic readings; lecture/discussion format. We'll ask: why such gender diversity in the human imagination across cultures? Required reading: (Links to this material to be posted to the course page prior to each week) Week 2: <i>The Zuni Man-Woman</i>, by Will Roscoe; Chapters 1 and 2 Week 3: <i>She Speaks Her Anger: Myths and Conversations of Gimi Women</i> by Gillian Gillison; Chapter 3 Week 4: <i>The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nation in Indonesia</i> by Tom Boellstorff, Chapter 1 and either Chapter 4 or 7		
	Instructor: Susan Rodgers is a sociocultural anthropologist (Ph.D. U of Chicago, anthropology, 1978) with years of teaching anthro of gender at Holy Cross (now emerita professor, anthropology). Her fieldwork concerns the Angkola Batak people of Sumatra, seen through their literatures and arts (numerous grants, including Fulbright research grant, Natl Endowment for Humanities). Susan has taught 3 WISE anthro courses, lives in Worcester, and does research on forced migrants in the city.	

A12. Military Disasters: Ancient/Modern Thursdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. September 17, 24, October 1, 8, 15	In Person AU Campus Kennedy 119	
This course will analyze thirty (30) famous very one-sided battles in history, ranging from Teutoburg Forest (in 9 AD) to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait (in 1991). Others will include Bunker Hill, "Pickett's Charge," the "Charge of the Light Brigade," and "Custer's Last Stand," discussing six each week, including Naval engagements. Several factors will be considered to determine the ultimate cause, and then the participants will be surveyed to give their own assessment of the battle, and to give their perceptions as how to affix blame for each of these, using ten possible causes, including - was the mission realistic; failures of leadership; tactics during the battle; and overconfidence in one's own forces/lack of respect for the enemy. Optional reading: <i>Great Military Disasters</i> by Julian Spilsbury ISBN 978-1-4351-2445-5 <i>Great Military Disasters</i> by Charles Messenger ISBN 978-0-8802-9646-1 <i>The Guinness Book of Military Blunders</i> by Geoffrey Regan ISBN 978-0-8511-2961-7		
	Instructor: John Northgraves was an adjunct faculty member (History) at Mass Bay Community College, where he taught U. S. History from 2013 to 2025. Before teaching at MBCC, he conducted adult study groups at Tufts University and Regis College during 2010 to 2013. John is a 1967 graduate of Tufts (Political Science major) and has focused on U.S. History for his study groups. After service in the Navy, John's career was in the technology field.	

A13. Becoming George Orwell

Fridays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
September 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16

Zoom



Eric Blair met Ernest Hemingway for the first time in Paris. He introduced himself as "Eric Blair". "What the f*ing hell do you want?" came the reply. "I'm George Orwell." "Why the f*ing hell didn't you say so?" It was Blair, son of a retired Assistant Sub-Deputy Opium Agent, third grade, who could open a small shop in a village south of London and barely be noticed by the townsfolk, but it was Orwell whose name became a famous dystopian adjective. It was almost the best of both worlds. We will read works by Orwell and reflect on the life of Blair.

Required reading:

"Why I Write" and "Politics and the English Language" by George Orwell; both essays are available on the Orwell Foundation website at <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/>

Recommended (optional) reading:

1984 by George Orwell

Orwell: The Authorized Biography by Michael Shelden



Instructor: Karl Hakkarainen is a long-time WISE instructor who has taught courses on literature, history, technology, music, and political science.

A14. Ten Nations in the Political Grey Zone: Democracy Struggles with Autocracy

Fridays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
September 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16

Zoom



This course explores the following countries in their struggle between democracy and dictatorship: Papua New Guinea and Fiji (two of the most influential nations in Oceania), Bhutan and Bangladesh (two countries with strong economic and cultural ties), Peru and Mexico (two countries in the Americas that have recently transformed themselves into electoral democracies), Morocco and Tunisia (two critical geopolitical countries in North Africa), and Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine (two European countries with war-torn histories).

Each pair of countries has struggled with the following characteristics: electoral frauds, pressure on political opposition, non-independent judiciaries, widespread corruption, harassment of media, low levels of political participation, and a declining rule of law. Each country will be analyzed according to a variety of indexes - from geography to climate, to demographics, to history, to politics and government, to economy and culture. The instructor welcomes a diversity of thought.



Instructor: Paul Macek has been an educator for over forty years. He has also worked as copyeditor, translator, writer, and publisher for over thirty years. He is the author of eight books: one on education, two on literature (one a translation), and five on American history.

A15. Universalism: The Belief that Everyone will be Reconciled to God

Fridays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
September 18, 25, October 2, 9, 16

In Person
AU Campus
Kennedy 119



The most prominent creeds and theologians of the Christian Church have advocated belief in an eternal hell whereby its inhabitants are doomed to a place of torment forever separated from God and salvation. But is this really the message of the Bible? David Bentley Hart makes a compelling case that the Christian theological tradition has misled readers on the crucial matter of universal salvation.

This class will explore the topic of universalism in the context of its related subjects of the idea of an eternal hell, the nature of God, the concept of divine judgment, the idea of the divine image in each person, and the nature of freedom.

Suggested reading:

That All Shall Be Saved: Heaven, Hell, and Universal Salvation by David Bentley Hart, Yale University Press, ISBN 978-0-300-25848-6



Instructor: Dr. Reverend Gary Shahinian is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, having served various Congregational churches for 32 years. He earned a Ph.D. degree in Philosophy from the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the problem of evil in the thought of Alfred North Whitehead, the father of Process Philosophy. He also holds Master's degrees from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, and Calvin Theological Seminary. He taught philosophy and theology courses at Redeemer College in Ontario, Dordt College in Iowa, and Worcester State University.

Fall 2026 Session A Schedule

	Monday 9/14, 9/28, 10/5, 10/19, 10/26 <i>No classes 9/21 or 10/12</i>	Tuesday 9/15, 9/22, 9/29, 10/6, 10/13	Wednesday 9/16, 9/23, 9/30, 10/7, 10/14	Thursday 9/17, 9/24, 10/1, 10/8, 10/15	Friday 9/18, 9/25, 10/2, 10/9, 10/16
10:00 am	A1. Gershwin and the American Opera Tradition Everett McCorvey Weeks 1-4 Zoom Week 5 In Person (location and time to be announced)	A4. Landscape Painting 1848- 1872 Martha Chiarchiaro Zoom	A7. Under-told Stories in American Religion Kathleen Fisher Zoom	A10. Troubadours of Folk Music David Nevard Zoom	A13. Becoming George Orwell Karl Hakkarainen Zoom
1:00 pm	A2. Topics in African Art Jean Borgatti In Person AU Kennedy 119	A5. Banks and Money Edward Goodwin In Person AU Kennedy 119	A8. Shakespeare's King Lear Whall/Vaughan In Person AU Kennedy 119	A11. Anthropology of Gender Susan Rodgers In Person AU Kennedy 119	A14. 10 Nations in the Political Grey Zone Paul Macek Zoom
3:00 pm	A3. Geologic Sojourns: North America and Beyond Andrew Koenigsberg In Person AU Kennedy 119	A6. Music of the Jazz Age 1902- 1932 Dave Radlauer Zoom	A9. Industrial Revolution New England 19th Century Pete Murphy In Person AU Kennedy 119	A12. Military Disasters: Ancient/Modern John Northgraves In Person AU Kennedy 119	A15. Universalism: Reconciled to God Gary Shahinian In Person AU Kennedy 119



Lifelong Learning is WISE

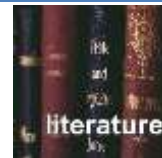
Session B Course Descriptions

B1. The Beatles Part 3 Mondays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	Zoom 
We explore the history and music of The Beatles in a 3-part series which incorporates lecture, audio, and video. In Part 3, The Beatles self-produce "Magical Mystery Tour." In February 1968, they visit India for meditation and compose songs which become the basis for "The Beatles" and the "White Album." In early 1969, they film rehearsals for a new album and tour. Instead, they play a rooftop concert and the album, "Get Back," is set aside. They work with George Martin on "Abbey Road" in 1969, then break up. The retitled "Let it Be" and rehearsal film is released soon after. Optional reading: <i>Long and Winding Roads, The Evolving Artistry of the Beatles</i>, Revised Edition, Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic (Kindle or Paperback)	
 Instructor: Gene Shwalb graduated from Oberlin Conservatory of music where he studied piano and cello. He received his M.Ed. from UMass Boston in online learning design, and recently retired after 17 years as a Learning Designer there. He edits the Music Museum of New England website: MMONE.org. Gene is currently enrolled in the post-graduate program "The Beatles: History and Culture" at Liverpool University. He is also proficient on synthesizer, bass, and guitar.	
B2. Economics and Current Events 2026 Mondays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	In Person AU Campus Kennedy 119 
The purpose of this course is to examine major issues in the news, using basic economic analysis to shed light on their causes and effects. Each class will begin with a brief informal description of a key economic concept with illustrations of how it can be applied to a prominent current issue. Most of the class time will be devoted to discussion of questions raised by participants either ahead of time by email, or during class. Scheduled class content may be preempted for discussion of compelling events. This course was previously offered in Fall 2025, but this year all examples and discussion issues will be drawn from 2026 news stories. The course is intended to be of interest to everyone, whether returnees or first-time students of economics. Suggested readings: <i>Principles of Economics 3e</i> (free online textbook at OpenStax.org) OR any other standard Principles of Economics text or your preferred daily news source.	
 Instructor: Tom Gottschang is Professor Emeritus of Economics at the College of the Holy Cross, where he taught economics for over 40 years. He earned his Ph.D. in economics and history at the University of Michigan.	

B3. Introducing Margaret Atwood: Canada's Leading Author

Mondays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
November 2, 9, 16, 23, 30

In Person
AU Campus
Kennedy 119



The Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has an international following and is well-known most recently in the United States as the author of the dystopian novels: *The Handmaid's Tale* and its sequel *The Testaments*. Americans, however, often miss how much Atwood's life as a Canadian infuses her work. The course will begin with her most recent book of linked short stories *Old Babes in the Wood*. The structure and its reflection of the 21st Century make it accessible to new and experienced readers. We will also read *Cat's Eye*, a semi-autobiographical novel set in her hometown of Toronto in the 20th century. This novel demonstrates where today's Atwood came from, both as author and public figure. Throughout the course, we will refer to and utilize insights from her recently published memoir, *Margaret Atwood, Book of Lives. A Memoir of Sorts*.

Required reading: *Old Babes in the Wood* by Margaret Atwood; Vintage Books 978-0-593-46841-8; 2024
Cat's Eye; Vintage Books

Optional reading: *Margaret Atwood Book of Lives A Memoir of Sorts*; Doubleday Hardcover Ed. 978-0385547512
Dropped Threads: What We Aren't Told; Carol Shields and Marjorie Anderson, eds. Vintage Canada, 2001 0-679-31071-1



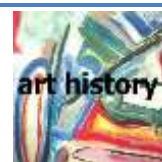
Instructor: Marcia Tannenbaum is a longtime WISE instructor who has taught Literature in various venues since her student teacher days at Simmons (College) University where she earned a bachelor's degree in the School of Education (1967) and a Master's Degree in English Language and Literature (1969). Since that time, she earned a Juris Doctor at the University of Connecticut School of Law (1980) following which she resided in Canada in the Ottawa area (Quebec and Ontario) and learned about Canadian culture and literature. Her teaching experience includes courses she created and taught in the US, Israel and Canada while residing in each of those countries. Marcia recently closed her law practice in Massachusetts which

focused on Family Law and Mediation after nearly forty years. She continues to read voraciously and looks forward to sharing Margaret Atwood's talent with her friends at WISE.

B4. Academic and Impressionist Painting 1870-1905

Tuesdays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
November 3, 17, 24 December 8, 15

Zoom



We will chronologically explore the paintings of artists in Europe and America from the last quarter of the 19th century. We'll compare and contrast Academic artists such as Gerome and Bouguereau and Impressionist paintings, the latter from France, Spain, and America, including the expatriates Whistler, Sargent, and Cassatt. Our examination will include the 8 Impressionist Exhibitions as well as the Universal Expositions held between 1876 and 1904. The work of Eakins and Homer will be compared with the later works of the American Impressionists. We will close our exploration with the avant guard works of artists such as Georges Rouault and Henri Matisse shown at the early Salon d'Automne exhibitions in the early 20th century.



Instructor: Martha Chiarchiaro has brought history to life through the art of the times for more than 30 years. She received her Master's degree in the History of Art from Williams College and teaches a variety of art history courses at the Worcester Art Museum and other local cultural organizations. Her specialty courses related to specific periods, artists, and activities provide a more in-depth look at the life and times of the people who are part of the exploration. Martha is fascinated by American history and the role of American artists in portraying the Revolutionary War.

B5. Thomas Merton and Billy Collins: Theological Poems

Tuesday 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
November 3, 10, 17, 24, December 1

In Person
AU Campus
Kennedy 119



Week 1: What is Poetry: The Perspectives of Merton and Collins

Week 2: Theological Poems I: Death

Week 3: Theological Poems II: Elegies

Week 4: Theological Poems III: The Afterlife

Week 5: Theological Poems IV: Summary and Guidelines for Living

Recommended reading:

Aimless Love, Billy Collins, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 9780812982671, 2014



Instructor: Tom Brennan previously taught several WISE courses - Robert Moses, and two courses on the poetry of Thomas Merton. He studied Merton's writings in college at the Catholic University during the early 60s and received a degree in Theology from Manhattan College in 1969.

B6. Humor 103: From the Dark to the Light with the Comedy in Between

Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
November 3, 10, 17, 24, December 1

In Person
AU Campus
Kennedy 119



Join us as we deep-dive into the ocean of Humor and explore various types of comedy. These include, Observational Humor with comics like David Brenner and Jerry Seinfeld who take everyday life and twist it a little bit, Self-Deprecating Humor with comics like Phyllis Diller and John Mullaney who muse about their own foibles, Dark Humor with comics like Sarah Silverman and Anthony Jeselnik who make light of serious subjects, along with Insult comics like Don Rickles. A spectrum of stand-up comics from the classic Henny Youngman to the improv of *Whose Line Is it Anyway?* to local favorite Jimmy Cash.

Students need not have taken Humor 101 or Humor 102 to enjoy this course.



Instructor: Joe Fusco is a Worcester County humorist/stand-up poet/storyteller. He writes a Humor column for *Worcester Magazine* and features at bookstores, libraries, clubs, and breakfast spots in central Massachusetts. He hosts the Richard Fox Poetry Series at the Broadway Restaurant in Worcester and The Poetry Extravaganza at The Mill in West Boylston. Joe taught Humor 101 and Humor 102 at WISE in 2023 and 2024, respectively, to modest accolades.

B7. Spiritual Vows and Social Values: IN, but not OF the World Wednesday 10:00 – 11:30 a.m. November 4, 18, December 2, 9, 16	Zoom 
Shakers are known for their furniture, the Amish for their horse-drawn buggies, and Trappist monks for their strawberry preserves. But behind the chairs, buggies, and jams exist counter-cultural communities devoted to God. Their focus on spiritual life reimagines the place of work, material goods, and community in the way we live. In this course we'll examine the role of prayer, work, simplicity, stability, and separation in the Amish, Shaker, and Trappist traditions. We'll compare practices across communities and examine current interest in applying them to the social challenges of consumerism, technology, loneliness, and economic inequality. Can secular society appropriate these spiritual values without changing their essence? Can one really live in, but not of, the world?	
	Instructor: Kathleen Fisher has taught for WISE since 2019, offering courses in religion and spirituality through a variety of poets, philosophers, religious figures, and historical texts. She holds a Ph.D. in Medieval History and Religion from Boston University. After a long teaching career in Theology at Assumption University, Kathleen now lives in Chapel Hill, NC where she also lectures in Elon University's Life@Elon program.
B8. Dog-Human Connection: Science & Stories Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. November 4, 18, December 2, 9, 16	In Person AU campus Kennedy 119 
This course explores the deep connections between dogs and humans. We will learn about the history of evolution and domestication, and explore the science of canine psychology and behavior, including the work of the Duke University Canine Cognition Center. We will also examine the bonding between dogs and humans, the role of oxytocin, and the many ways dogs work alongside us. Additionally, guest speakers from NEADS will provide an in-depth look at service dogs, and we will discuss some famous dog-human relationships and tributes to much-loved dogs.	
	Instructor: Jean Sifleet is a retired business attorney and CPA. Jean has taught numerous courses for WISE and welcomes participant discussion of the issues.
B9. Brave New World? Genetic Engineering Comes of Age Wednesdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. November 4, 18, December 2, 9, 16	In Person AU campus Kennedy 119 
Recent advances in biology have opened possibilities for humans to modify the genes of other humans and to repair/replace damaged organs, but much research remains to be done. In this course, we'll discuss some of these pioneering studies in gene editing, human development, animal cloning, and organ transplantation. The course will hopefully provide the scientific basis needed for non-scientists to appreciate the advances described in the popular press. We have a long way to go before Huxley's <i>Brave New World</i> arrives!	
	Instructor: Clare O'Connor is a cell biologist who received her Ph.D. from Purdue and led a research lab at the former Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology in Shrewsbury from 1984-1995. From 1995 to 2017, she was a professor in the Boston College Biology Department, where she taught both introductory and advanced courses in genetics and molecular cell biology. Since retiring in 2018, she has taught several WISE courses in these same subject areas.

B10. Leftist Dreams, Soviet Graves: The Migration to Karelia in the 1930s

Thursdays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
October 29, November 5, 12, 19, December 3

Zoom



In the late 1920s and early 1930s, the USSR recruited North Americans of Finnish descent to work in the forests, farms, and mines of Karelia, the northwestern Soviet province that bordered on Finland. Young and old, thousands contracted what came to be called "Karelian Fever." They answered the call, but their zeal for work was no match for Stalin's paranoia about these foreigners. Many were shot, imprisoned in Siberia, or simply left to starve. This course will show you how Stalin's Great Terror battered and betrayed the Finnish socialists and communists who had come to help.

Optional reading:

They Took My Father by Mayme Sevander, ISBN 9780816643363

The Search for a Socialist El Dorado by Alexey Golubev and Irina Takala, ISBN 9781611861150



Instructor: Karl Hakkarainen is a long-time WISE instructor who has taught courses on history, technology, literature, music, and intellectual property law. He previously taught "Suitcases Full of Socialism," which examined immigrants who came to the United States in the 19th century, bringing with them their socialist ideals and strategies.

B11. 100 Years Ago, 1926, America's Adolescence

Thursdays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
October 29, November 5, 12, 19, December 3

In Person
AU campus
Kennedy 119



The United States, a mere 150 years old in 1926, showed signs that the nation was rapidly maturing. 1926 was, in fact a "noisy, quiet year." World War I had ended 6 years before and many of the men sent back from Europe, forever changed, had adopted a more sophisticated worldview. Numerous constitutional amendments were passed proving that the Constitution was a living document. And, despite or even because of prohibition, the decade roared. **Five WISE instructors** will focus on five major developments from that year: the rapid spread of radio as well as new forms of journalism, (Rosemary McCarthy); the rising importance of labor as workers shifted from farms to factories (Peter Murphy); the shift from locally named roads to nationally numbered highways (David Navarr); the increasing incentive for citizens to attend high school and even prepare for college (Susan Starr); the claim to a world audience made by American authors (Helen Whall). Each week, students will be asked to make connections among these events while looking ahead to where we are in 2026.

Suggested reading: *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway (any edition)

Blue Highways: A Journey Into America by William Least Heat-Moon (1982)

Instructors: Rosemary McCarthy, Pete Murphy, David Nevard, Susan Starr, Helen Whall

B12. Balls and Strikes? The Evolution of Chief Justice John Roberts and His Court

Thursdays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.

October 29, November 5, 12, 19, December 3

In Person
AU campus
Kennedy 119



This course will examine the evolution of the Supreme Court since the appointment of Chief Justice John Roberts in 2005. The past two decades have seen a shift from an ideologically balanced Court -- with a mix of liberal and conservative judges -- to a solid 6-3 conservative Court following Donald Trump's three nominations during his first term. The modern version of the Roberts Court has effected major doctrinal changes in areas such as abortion rights, voting rights, government regulation, environmental protection, presidential power, and the role of religion in society. Along the way, Chief Justice Roberts -- while often depicted as an "institutionalist" concerned with the integrity and public image of the Court -- arguably has pursued a sometimes hidden agenda that has gradually weakened many individual and civil rights and has consistently ruled in favor of corporate interests (and recently the Trump administration).

This course will examine both the ideologies and voting patterns of the individual justices, the institutional and political forces that have shaped the Court, the antimajoritarian nature of the Court, ethical issues, and proposals for Supreme Court reform.



Instructor: Jack Ross John S. Ross, III (Jack) earned an A.B. degree (history) from Yale University, a J.D. degree from the University of Virginia School of Law, and an LL.M. degree (taxation) from New York University School of Law. He practiced law in Washington D.C. for twenty years and served as an Adjunct Professor of Law at Washington and Lee University School of Law. Jack has taught numerous courses in the WISE program focused on constitutional law and the Supreme Court, and facilitates the WISE Supreme Court SIG.

B13. African American History 1620-1865

Fridays 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

November 6, 13, 20, December 4, 11

Zoom



Beginning in the colonial era, the course will examine the experiences, contributions, and lives of African Americans throughout the United States through the Civil War. By exploring a variety of people, students will increase their knowledge about African Americans from roughly 1620 to 1865. As agents of their lives, African Americans engaged in the fight to end or escape from slavery, participated in political power, and became critical members of their communities while contributing to the growth of early America.



Instructor: Linda Morse earned a Master's Degree from Providence College focusing on American History, minoring in Asian studies. She earned a certificate from Boston University's Teaching Africa program and taught AP and college prep U.S. History I & II for decades as well as civics, anthropology, AP African American studies, and AP Human Geography. Learning about the African continent both historically and culturally provides Linda with a cultural and historical understanding of America's diverse populations.

B14. The Science of Happiness

Fridays 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
November 6, 13, 20, December 4, 11

In Person
AU campus
Kennedy 119



Influenced by Aristotle, John Locke coined the term "pursuit of happiness." Thomas Jefferson never explained his use of this phrase as stated in the Declaration of Independence. Social sciences, however, have plenty to say about it. Positive Psychology makes a large contribution to this area of inquiry. This specific discipline within the field of psychology, concerns itself with the use of psychological theory, research, and clinical techniques toward understanding resilient, adaptive, creative, positive, and emotionally fulfilling aspects of human behavior. This class will explore what the science of happiness has to say about your own pursuit of a life worth living.

Readings (links to all texts will be provided):

The Positive Shift, Catherine A. Sanderson, BenBella, 9781946885449, 2019 - Chapter 6 (pp. 109-129)

The Happiness Advantage, Shawn Achor, Crown Business, 9780307591548, 2010 - Principle #7 (pp. 171-196)

Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones Documentary (on Netflix)



Instructor: Neal Lipsitz recently retired from the College of the Holy Cross as Associate Dean for Student Wellbeing and Director of Student Accessibility Services where he also taught courses in psychology. After earning his Ph.D. from Boston College, Neal has practiced as a licensed psychologist for over 40 years. He has published frequently in his field and continues to present on various areas within psychology at local, national, and international conferences.

B15. The Historical Jesus: 5 Views

Fridays 3:00 – 4:30 p.m.
November 6, 13, 20, December 4, 11

In Person
AU campus
Kennedy 119



This course will explore the views of five leading New Testament scholars on the historical Jesus. Robert M. Price is a leading proponent of mythicism, the view that there never was a person called Jesus of Nazareth. John Dominic Crossan is a former Catholic priest who was a leader in the "Third Quest for the Historical Jesus" and co-founder of the controversial Jesus Seminar. Luke Timothy Johnson is a Catholic scholar critically engaged with the Jesus Seminar who defends the traditional view of Jesus as the living, resurrected Lord and Savior proclaimed by the Church. James D. G. Dunn was a British New Testament scholar from the Methodist tradition who emphasized the oral tradition of stories and sayings of Jesus before the written Gospels and the varied symphony of portrayals of Jesus found in the New Testament. Darrell L. Bock is a conservative evangelical scholar and Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, the center of Dispensationalism, the leading theology of the end times for 50,000,000 American evangelical Christians. The chosen book, *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, sets forth the views of each of these scholars in his own words and allows the others to challenge his claims.

Required reading: *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* edited by James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy
InterVarsity Press ISBN 978-0-8308-3868-4



Instructor: Dr. Rev Gary Shahinian is an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, having served various Congregational churches for 32 years. He earned a Ph.D. degree in Philosophy from the Free University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. He wrote his doctoral dissertation on the problem of evil in the thought of Alfred North Whitehead, the father of Process Philosophy. He also holds Master's degrees from the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto, United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, and Calvin Theological Seminary. He taught philosophy and theology courses at Redeemer College in Ontario, Dordt College in Iowa, and Worcester State University.

Fall 2026 Session B Schedule

	Monday 11/2, 11/9, 11/16, 11/23, 11/30	Tuesday 11/3, 11/10, 11/17, 11/24, 12/1	Wednesday 11/4, 11/18, 12/2, 12/9, 12/16 <i>No classes 11/11 or 11/25</i>	Thursday 10/29, 11/5, 11/12, 11/19, 12/3 <i>No classes 11/26</i>	Friday 11/6, 11/13, 11/20, 12/4, 12/11 <i>No classes 11/27</i>
10:00 am	B1. The Beatles Part 3 Gene Shwalb Zoom	B4. Academic & Impressionist Painting 1870- 1905 <i>No class 11/10 or 12/1 Last class is 12/15</i> Martha Chiarchiaro Zoom	B7. Spiritual Vows and Social Values Kathleen Fisher Zoom	B10. Leftist Dreams, Soviet Graves: 1930s Karl Hakkarainen Zoom	B13. African American History Linda Morse Zoom
1:00 pm	B2. Economics and Current Events 2026 Tom Gottschang In Person AU Kennedy 119	B5. Merton & Collins: Theological Poems Tom Brennan In Person AU Kennedy 119	B8. Dog-Human Connection Jean Sifleet In Person AU Kennedy 119	B11. America's Adolescence: 1926 McCarthy, Murphy, Nevard, Starr, Whall In Person AU Kennedy 119	B14. The Science of Happiness Neal Lipsitz In Person AU Kennedy 119
3:00 pm	B3. Margaret Atwood Marcia Tannenbaum In Person AU Kennedy 119	B6. Humor 103 From Dark to Light Joseph Fusco Jr In Person AU Kennedy 119	B9. Brave New World? Genetic Engineering Clare O'Connor In Person AU Kennedy 119	B12. Balls and Strikes: Chief Justice John Roberts Jack Ross In Person AU Kennedy 119	B15. The Historical Jesus: 5 Views Gary Shahinian In Person AU Kennedy 119



Lifelong Learning is WISE