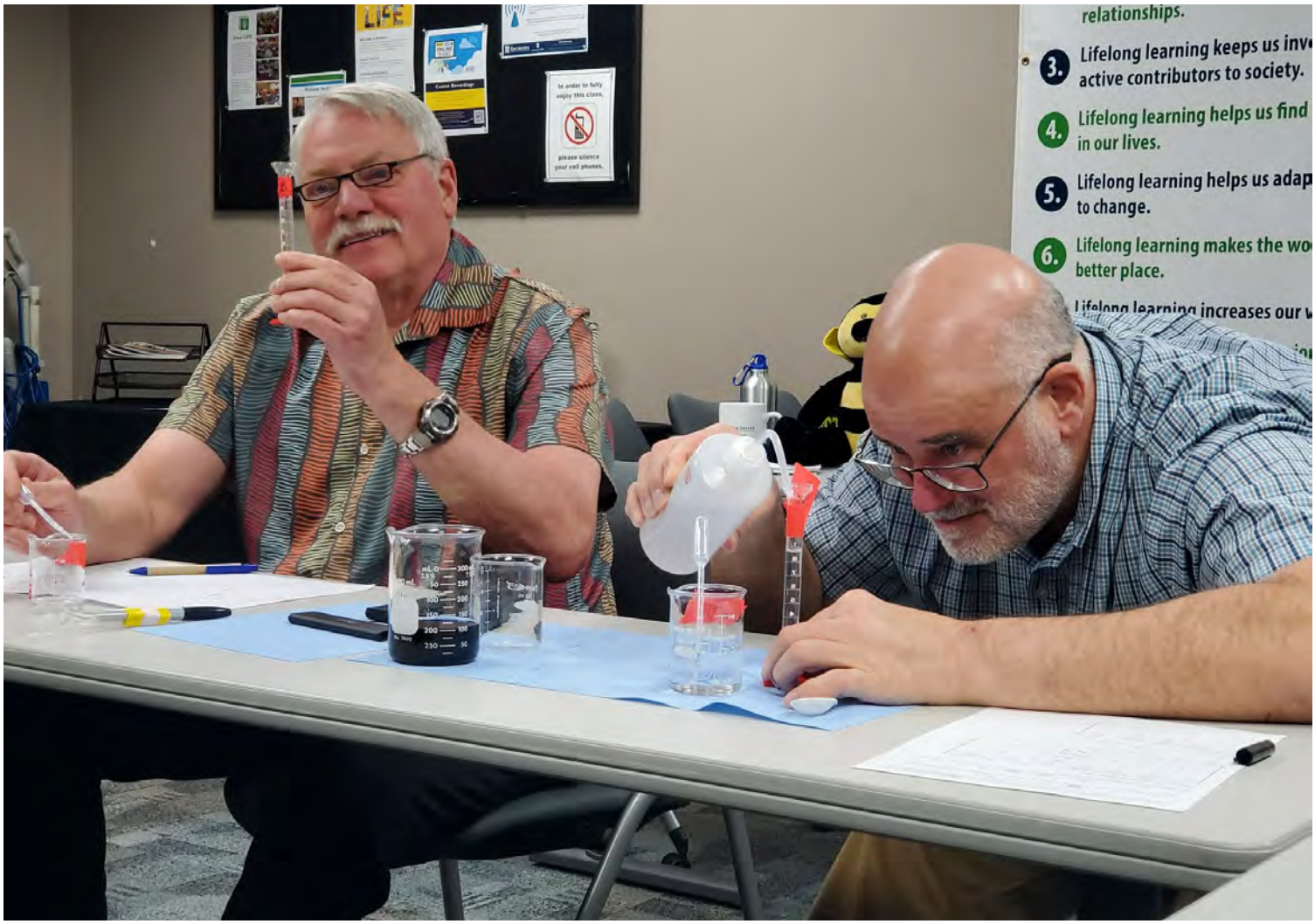
Learning Is ForEver

RCTC LIFE

LIFE PROGRAM

Learning Is ForEver

SEPTEMBER | OCTOBER | NOVEMBER | DECEMBER | 2026



Providing adult education, insight, and engagement

www.learningisforever.net | facebook.com/RCTCLIFE

FOR PROGRAM INFORMATION, PLEASE PHONE 507-280-3157

Supported by Rochester Community and Technical College

Welcome to Learning Is ForEver at RCTC



FROM THE OFFICE

As we embrace a new academic year, we are inspired by the curiosity, enthusiasm, and love of learning that each of our members brings to every class, discussion, and event. Whether you're returning for another year or joining us for the first time, we hope you'll discover new ideas, make meaningful connections, and enjoy spending time with fellow learners. We also want to thank you for being an important part of our community. Each class you attend, friend you invite, and opportunity you share helps the LIFE program continue to grow. We are grateful for your support and look forward to learning with you this semester. See you in class!

Kerry Novotny
Senior Programs Director
Kerry.Novotny@rctc.edu
507-280-3571

Jamie Schroeder
Administrative Assistant
Jamie.Schroeder@rctc.edu
507-280-3157



FROM THE ADVISORY CHAIR

As the new chair of the Advisory Committee, I'm looking forward to dozens of interesting classes, special events, and connecting with the friends I've made through this wonderful organization. This catalog is the start to the fall semester. The back page announces our annual Harvest Dinner with guest speaker Sheila Kiscaden, member of the Minnesota Legislature and Olmsted County Board of Commissioners. It seems appropriate during this election year to hear the stories of her service and to be reminded that indeed all politics are local. Get out and vote! Keep this catalog in a conspicuous place in your home to remind you to register for classes/events and talk to your friends and neighbors about the many opportunities this program offers to energize your mind and your social opportunities.

Pixy Russell
LIFE Advisory Committee Chair

ABOUT LIFE

As part of the Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) outreach effort, Learning Is ForEver (LIFE) provides stimulating educational programs and encourages social and personal growth for lifelong learners in our growing and diverse community. This is accomplished through various affordable classes, including lectures, discussion groups, and other learning opportunities, all in an accessible setting. LIFE offers classes in Current Affairs, History, Humanities, Science/Math/Technology, Personal Interest, and Travel. There are no educational requirements, term papers, or tests. Everyone succeeds, and all are welcome!

PICTURED ON THE COVER



Dean Waldof (left) moved from Minneapolis to Rochester in 1982 and loves what both cities have to offer. He feels lucky to have worked with some great teams during his career as a Mechanical Engineer. Now that he and his wife are retired, they decided to travel as much as possible. They are lucky to own beautiful, wooded acreage. Nature feeds Dean's soul and the hard work maintaining the woods keeps him out of trouble. Dean enjoys the variety of LIFE classes offered and shares that one way to truly enjoy life is to learn something new every day.

Michael Schweyen (right) is a retired civil engineer who lives in Rochester with his wife Lucille. He loved chemistry as a child and as a student in high school and college but did not major in it. Michael attended North Dakota State University in Fargo in the mid 1980s. He is new to the LIFE Program and enjoys the fascinating topics and expert presenters. Recent classes like Bertha Benz and the American Revolution made history come alive. "It is a fun and easy way to learn new things!"

www.learningisforever.net

BECOMING A MEMBER
To attend LIFE classes, participants may choose to purchase a membership to enjoy reduced class fees. Non-members are always welcome but pay a slightly higher fee per class. 12-month memberships (September through August) are only $35. Memberships are non-refundable.

LOCATION
Classes are held in person at RCTC Heintz Center, located at 1926 Collegeview Road SE, Rochester, or online via Zoom.

TUITION ASSISTANCE
Tuition assistance is available. Reach out to our office for information.

GUEST POLICY
Members may bring a guest (someone who has not attended before) to a class at no charge. Please contact our office for more information.

WAYS TO REGISTER

ONLINE
Available for members with credit card payment at www.learningisforever.net

MAIL
Include the registration form and a check payable to "RCTC LIFE"

RCTC LIFE Program
851 30th Avenue SE, Box 50
Rochester, MN 55904

IN PERSON
Bring a check payable to "RCTC LIFE"

RCTC Heintz Center
1926 Collegeview Road SE
Rochester, MN 55904

CLASS FORMATS

IN PERSON
The class is held in an RCTC classroom unless otherwise noted.

ONLINE
Live class online. The Zoom link will be emailed before the class.

HYBRID
Live in-person and online at the same time. The Zoom link will be emailed before the class.

DISCUSSION GROUP
A conversation that allows participation by all members.

VIEWING ROOM
We welcome you to our viewing room to watch any online class on the big screen. Contact our office to reserve your seat.

HEARING ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE



Most classrooms are equipped with hearing loop technology to support assistive listening. To use this feature, switch your hearing aid or cochlear implant to the telecoil (T-switch) setting when you arrive. If needed, earbuds and neck loop receivers are available for your use.

CANCELLATION/REFUND POLICY
Cancellation requests must be made **five business days before** the class starts. A $5 processing fee will be retained.

- In the event the LIFE Program is canceled, a full refund will be issued.
- If RCTC classes are canceled due to inclement weather, all LIFE classes will be canceled (and rescheduled if possible).
- If Rochester Public Schools are closed but RCTC remains open, LIFE will hold classes.



Course Recordings

Miss a class you wished you could have attended?

Want to learn about a topic that was offered previously?

Wish you could share a past class with a friend?

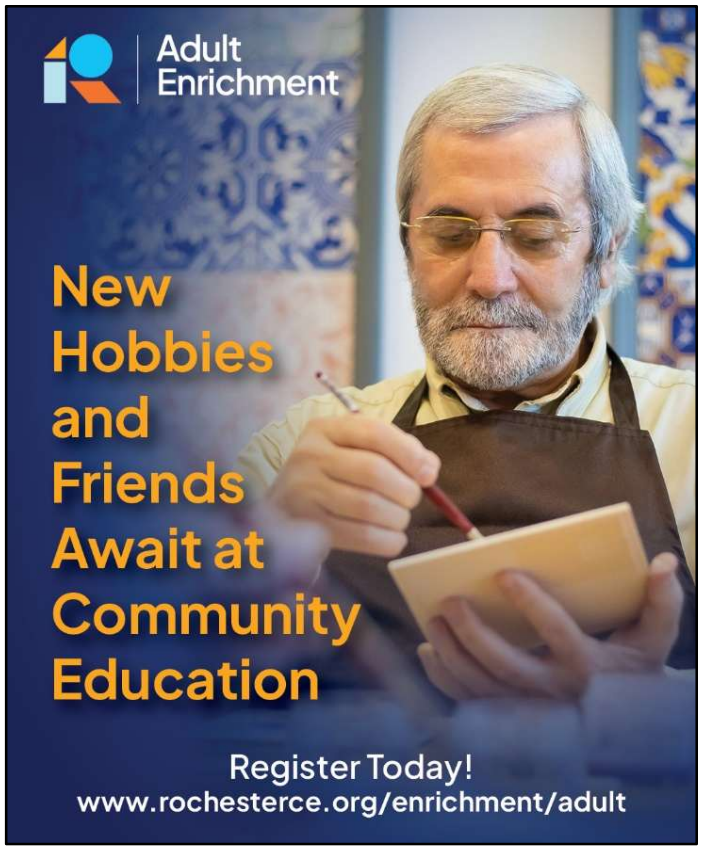
We've got you covered!

Many of our online classes have been recorded and are kept in our archive for one year. Purchase a recording for only $10/recording/person!

Purchases can be made online or by completing the paper form. To purchase online or learn more, visit www.learningisforever.net or scan code.

Questions? Call 507-280-3157 or email jamie.schroeder@rctc.edu





Classes by Category

CURRENT AFFAIRS
* Headliners..... 5, 8, 15, 21, 27
Middle East Conflict..... 13
Deepfakes..... 17
Jewish Life in Germany..... 26
Lethal Injection..... 28

EVENTS
* Harvest Dinner..... 18

HISTORY
* Murderers Cannot Hide..... 7
President Who?..... 8
Great Lakes at War..... 9
New Nation..... 5, 10
Winston Churchill..... 10
Joseph Goebbels..... 10
Hinckley Fire of 1894..... 12
Families of Nazi Elite..... 12
* Liberalism..... 13
The Mitford Family..... 14
Galveston..... 15
Hitler Escaped Murder..... 15
James-Younger Gang..... 16
* Great Snakes..... 16
Celebrities Go to War..... 18
* Owatonna State School..... 19
Islam in the U.S..... 19
Creation of Italy..... 20
Genocide Communicate... 21
* Wheels of Murder..... 22
Murder of Rasputin..... 22
Historic Muskego Church.. 22
* Ku Klux Klan in MN..... 23
Britain's Tragedy..... 23
Turning Points..... 24
Silver Strike..... 25
Air Traffic Control..... 25
* History Center..... 26
Louis XIV - The Sun King.... 26
Life of Mary Lincoln..... 28
Early Theologians..... 29
Glenn Miller..... 29
Richard Wagner..... 30

HUMANITIES
** Great Literature..... 5, 8
Russian Film..... 9, 16, 28
The Beats..... 11
* Rated R..... 6, 11, 20, 24, 30
LIFE Book Group..... 6, 11
The Highwaymen..... 12
Capote, Swans, 60th..... 12
Woodstock..... 14
Reformation Splendors..... 15
* The Great Arrangers..... 16
Edgar Allan Poe..... 17
Tennyson..... 17
* One Hit Wonders..... 18
Hauntingly Good Art..... 19
Gone With the Wind..... 19
Pete Seeger..... 20
Pre-Raphaelites..... 21
Mississippi River Blues..... 22
* Crosby, Stills, Nash, Young 23
Lost Generation..... 24
Who was Hilma of Klint..... 25
Giuseppe and Carl..... 26
Motown..... 27
William Butler Yeats..... 28
Marc Chagall..... 29
* History Songs..... 30
* Christmas Extravaganza..... 30

PERSONAL INTEREST
* Public Speaking..... 7
* 107 Days at Sea..... 8
Don't Take the Bait..... 9
Generational Cycles..... 13
* Philosophy of Politics..... 14
Misinformation..... 17
Culinaria Germania..... 18
Betting the Farm..... 21
* Phases of IRA..... 21
* Reverse Mortgages..... 22
Farewell..... 23
John Wayne Gacy..... 25
Faces of St. Nicholas..... 26
America Loves Lucy..... 29

SCIENCE/MATH/TECH
* Monarch Butterflies..... 7
* Native Americans SE MN.... 9
Meteors and Craters..... 10
Webb Space Telescope.... 11
* Boundary Waters..... 13
Saving St. Anthony Falls.... 13
* RV Blue Heron..... 14
* Healthy Aging..... 17
Owls of North America..... 18
Rapids to Reservoirs..... 18
* How Seeds Move..... 19
* Proteins Get Bent..... 20
Stars of Harry Potter..... 24
Why/How Sleep..... 27
Brain Health..... 27

TRAVEL
Great River Road..... 29

*Signifies in person class
**Signifies hybrid class

TIME TO RENEW YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP!

All individuals participating in LIFE classes are required to be a LIFE member or pay an increased fee as a non-member.

Membership for the academic year (September thru August) is $35 per person. Additional fees are charged per course.

Renew by using the paper registration form or online at www.learningisforever.net.

GREAT LITERATURE BOOK GROUP

Stephen MacLennan and Betty Spitzmiller facilitate discussions of great literature for people who love reading (and sometimes rereading) and making connections with the author, fellow readers, and their own lives.

This year's group will read *Best American Short Stories of the Century*, edited by John Updike and Katrina Kenison and published in 1999 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. This collection contains 55 stories selected from *The Best American Short Stories* series 1915-1998 and includes stories from William Faulkner, Willa Cather, Philip Roth, and Alice Munro. (You'll want the first edition; available from Amazon.) Over the summer, we'll read Gail Tsukiyama's novel *The Samurai's Garden* and discuss it at the September session.

Discussions are presented in a hybrid format: choose to meet in person at the Heintz Center or join via Zoom. The group will meet on the first (non-holiday) Thursday of each month. **The class fee covers all sessions, September-May.** Come to class prepared to discuss pre-selected works of classic literature!

$40/$50 Sep 3, Oct 1, Nov 5, Dec 3

10:00 AM-12:00 PM Hybrid/Room H1305

HEADLINERS

Gather, listen, and learn! Meet in person once a month to engage in a thoughtful exchange of ideas, opinions, and information with facilitators Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell.

This is a place to flex your brain, find gratification in being acknowledged for what you know, and be humbled by the knowledge of others. Bring current newspaper/magazine topics or other topics you would like to discuss.

There is no registration fee; however, you need to pre-register. Each class is limited to 12 participants to ensure everyone has time to share their thoughts.

Fri, Sep 4, Oct 2, Nov 6, Dec 4

1:00 PM-3:00 PM Room H1305

HOW TO BUILD A NEW NATION: AMERICA AFTER 1776

How do you build a nation from scratch? How do people come together to construct a new national government, constitution, military, economy, society, and culture in the wake of revolution and independence? How do we create something new and lasting from the ashes of something old, battered, and broken?

This new course with Richard Bell invites you to explore one of history's greatest experiments in nation-building: the rise of the early American republic. Between 1776 and 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of independence and the year both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams finally passed away, the United States transformed from a fragile collection of rebellious colonies into a sprawling, diverse, and deeply divided continental power.

Through six wide-ranging talks informed by post-colonial theory and studies of comparative nationalism, we will trace how Americans from every possible background wrestled with the significant challenge of constructing a government strong enough to endure, yet flexible enough to embody ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy—ideals that remain hotly contested today.

The class fee covers all six sessions.

$72/$82 Sep 14, 21, 28, Oct 5, 12, 19

10:00-11:30 AM Online via Zoom



Why name LIFE in Your Will or Trust

Since 1993, the LIFE Program has been an integral part of Rochester Community and Technical College's outreach by inspiring lifelong learners to engage, discover, and grow. LIFE has received financial support from individuals who have included the LIFE Program as a beneficiary of their wills and estate plans.

By naming the LIFE Program as a beneficiary in your will or trust, you are expressing gratitude for all the opportunities our educational programs have provided. This gesture ensures that the programs you cherish will continue to enrich the lives of lifelong learners for years to come.

Your Legacy Shapes our Future

Thanks to bequests and other major gifts, the LIFE Program can grow and offer innovative new classes to meet the changing interests of our diverse community. Our commitment to creating stimulating educational experiences will fulfill lifelong dreams and foster lasting connections well into the future.

Have you already named the RCTC LIFE Program as a beneficiary of your will or trust? If so, please contact the RCTC Foundation at 507-281-7771. We would love to thank you for your generosity!

RATED R FOR READ!

Whether you are a reader wanting to discuss the book you read, or a movie buff who enjoys the story played out on screen, this is for you!

Enjoy themed snacks as you watch a movie based on a novel. After the movie Stephen MacLennan will facilitate a discussion of the book and movie. You are encouraged to read the selected book before the movie; however, if you'd rather just come and enjoy the movie, snacks, and fellowship, that is fine too.

Please plan to get your own copy of each selected title. Don't miss your chance to answer the question as to which is better, the book or the movie?

Sep 17 *The Devil Wears Prada*

Oct 29 *Coraline*

Nov 19 *Pride and Prejudice*

Dec 17 *The Christmas Carol*



$10/$20 (per session) 10:00 AM-1:00 PM

Location: Forté Living Movie Theatre Room
3975 Superior Dr NW, Rochester

LIFE BOOK GROUP

Enjoy lively and thoughtful book discussions with fellow readers on the third Friday of each month! Group members suggest and select the books, and discussions are facilitated by Steve Troutman. Please plan to get your own copy of each selected title. Remaining books will be chosen in the spring. **The class fee covers all sessions, September-June.**

Sep 18 *A Fever in the Heartland* by Timothy Egan

Oct 16 *1984* by George Orwell

Nov 20 *Eleanor* by David Michaelis

Dec 18 *The Showman: Inside the Invasion That Shook the World and Made a Leader of Volodymyr Zelensky* by Simon Shuster

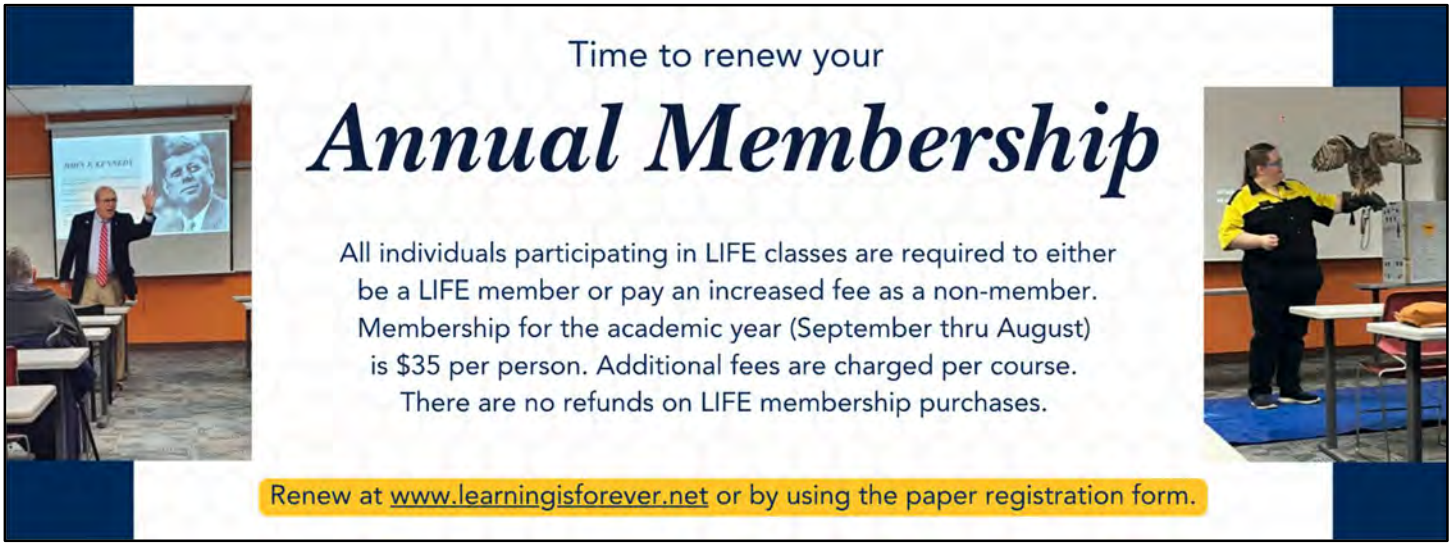
Jan 15 *22 Cells in Nuremberg: In the Nazi Mind* by Douglas Kelley

Feb 19 *An Unfinished Love Story: A Personal History of the 1960s* by Doris Kearns Goodwin



$40/$50

9:00 AM-11:00 AM Online via Zoom



Monarch Butterflies: Amazing Insects. Lecture, Tagging, and Release with Joel Dunnette



The world of insects is vast, diverse, and amazing in so many ways. monarch butterflies are a charismatic representative of this important part of life on Earth. Come learn about insects through the example of the monarch. We hope to have monarch butterflies available to handle and tag.

T	Sep 1	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Room H1415

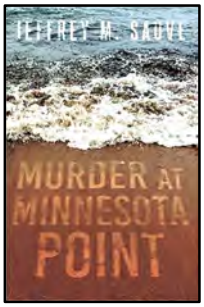
Effective Public Speaking: Proven Insider Tips with Edward Creagan, MD, FAAHPM



Public speaking can be a stressful event. However, most of us will be expected to speak in public at some point in life. A wedding, a funeral, an anniversary, a retirement, or at some event to promote a program, a project, or a proposal. Dr. Edward Creagan has delivered more than 1000 presentations throughout the world. He has formal training in acting and presentation skills and has worked with professional coaches in the Twin Cities. He has been awarded the International Toastmasters award for speaking skills.

T	Sep 1	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Room H1415

Murderers Cannot Hide From History (Nor Authors) with Jeff Sauve



In 1894, before modern forensics or criminology, a young woman was found murdered on the remote sands of Minnesota Point in Duluth-a case that newspapers soon billed as the "Crime of the Century." This presentation examines how detectives of the era worked with the limited criminal-science tools available to them. Minnesota true-crime author and retired St. Olaf College Archivist Jeff Sauve also reflects on his ten-year research journey that brought this case back into the light in *Murder at Minnesota Point*. Copies of the award-winning book will be available for purchase after the lecture (cash only/$10 per copy).

W	Sep 2	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Room H1415

Great Literature with Betty Spitsmiller & Stephen MacLennan



Stephen MacLennan and Betty Spitzmiller facilitate discussions of great literature for people who love reading (and sometimes rereading) and making connections with the author, fellow readers, and their own lives. This year's group will be reading *Best American Short Stories of the Century*, edited by John Updike and Katrina Kenison and published in 1999 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. This collection contains 55 stories selected from *The Best American Short Stories* series 1915-1998 and includes stories from such authors as William Faulkner, Willa Cather, Philip Roth, and Alice Munro. Be sure to buy the first edition of this anthology, which is available from Amazon. Over the summer, the group will read Gail Tsukiyama's novel *The Samurai's Garden* and discuss it at the September session. Discussions are presented in a hybrid format: each month, members may choose to meet in person at the Heintz Center or join via Zoom. The group will meet on the first Thursday of each month, September-May. The class fee covers all sessions. Members should come to class prepared to discuss pre-selected stories of classic literature.

Th	Sep 3, Oct 1, Nov 5, Dec 3	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$40/$50	Hybrid/Room H1305

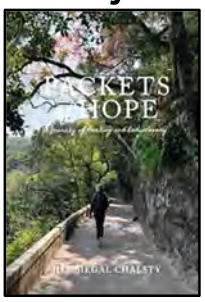
Headliners with Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell



Meet in person once a month to engage in a thoughtful exchange of ideas, opinions, and information with facilitators Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell. This is a place to flex your brain and find gratification in being acknowledged for what you know and humbled by the knowledge of others. Bring current newspapers, magazine topics or any other topics you would like to discuss. All are welcome; however, please pre-register. Class is limited to the first 12 registered each date to keep the group at a size where everyone will have time to express their thoughts. There is no fee attached to this class.

F	Sep 4	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$0/$0	Room H1305

107 Days at Sea: The Journey That Changed Everything with Jill Siegal Chalsty



At 63, Jill Chalsty boarded a ship alone, grieving her husband's death and battling cancer. What began as a voyage around the world became far more than a trip. In this lecture, Jill shares the story behind her memoir *Packets of Hope*, inviting participants to travel alongside her through the ports she visited, the people she met, and the reflections that transformed personal adversity into strength and global impact. Jill demonstrates how one person's courage can create ripples that span continents. Participants are encouraged to read her memoir, available free at www.packetsofhope.com, before the presentation.

T	Sep 8	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Room H1415

President Who? Lesser-Known Presidents in American History with Valerie Gugala



Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Kennedy. These are familiar names to most Americans. But have you heard of Millard Fillmore, Chester A. Arthur, or Benjamin Harrison? These and other lesser-known presidents will be discussed. Learn who these men were, how they became president, and what they did once they had achieved that office. We will also touch on their wives, families, and life after the presidency.

T	Sep 8	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Don't Take the Bait! The Propaganda of Influencers and Outrage Media with Renee Hobbs



As intentional falsehoods and hate have become a rhetorical strategy with profound consequences for democracy, media consumers need practical strategies to protect themselves from the propaganda of influencers and outrage media. Explore how propaganda achieves its goals by activating strong emotions, simplifying complex issues, appealing to our deepest hopes and fears, and attacking opponents to undermine trust. Using current examples, we will examine clickbait, scams, personalization, algorithms, and AI.

W	Sep 9	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

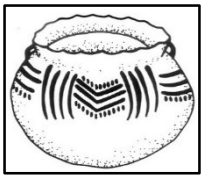
The Great Lakes at War with Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi



During WWII, the Great Lakes were a major advantage for the U.S. military. These inland seas were the perfect location to train pilots to land on aircraft carriers, fly practice runs, and perfect in-flight maneuvers. On land, women took over shipbuilding in Manitowoc and helped produce badly needed submarines. This program tells how the Great Lakes answered the call to duty during WWII, and how scientists are still trying to find missing planes in Lake Huron flown by Tuskegee Airmen.

W	Sep 9	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Precontact Native Americans in Southeastern Minnesota with Constance Arzigian



What was life like in Minnesota 13,000 years ago? How did it change as Native Americans adapted to environmental and cultural changes? Who were the first farmers in the region and how did agriculture modify lifeways? We'll discuss 13,000 years of human adaptation up to the contact era in southeastern Minnesota.

Th	Sep 10	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Room H1415

Russian Film: *East/West* with Asya Pereltsvaig



In this class, we'll take a deep dive into life in the post-WWII Soviet Union through the eyes of characters who bridge between the USSR (East) and France (West). Communal apartments, the ongoing persecution of dissidents, and what it was like to want to leave "the workers' paradise" – all that and more in the "Best Foreign Film" nominee, *East/West*. Directed by Frenchman Régis Wargnier, it stars both Russian and French actors: Sandrine Bonnaire, Oleg Menshikov, Catherine Deneuve, and Sergei Bodrov Jr. We will meet at the Heintz Center on Wednesday, September 9, to watch the film WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES as a group at 4:00 PM. Bring an appetizer to share, and LIFE will provide the paper products and water. If you can't make the group viewing on the 9th, contact the LIFE office, and we will assist you in finding a copy of the film on a streaming service. The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

W	Sep 9	4:00 PM – Movie Viewing		Room H1100
Th	Sep 10	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Your Ideas Help Shape LIFE

We appreciate your taking time to complete class evaluations.
Your comments and suggestions matter!
The feedback is reviewed by the Advisory Committee and helps guide
future class offerings, special events, and program planning.

How to Build a New Nation: America After 1776 with Richard Bell



How do you build a nation from scratch? How do people come together to construct a new national government, constitution, military, economy, society, and culture in the wake of revolution and independence? How do we create something new and lasting from the ashes of something old and battered and broken? This new course invites you to explore one of history's greatest experiments in nation-building: the rise of the early American republic. Between 1776 and 1826, the fiftieth anniversary of independence and the year both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams finally passed away, the United States transformed from a fragile collection of rebellious colonies into a sprawling, diverse, and deeply divided continental power. Through six wide-ranging talks informed by post-colonial theory and studies of comparative nationalism, we will trace how Americans from every possible background wrestled with the significant challenge of constructing a government strong enough to endure, yet flexible enough to embody ideals of liberty, equality, and democracy—ideals that remain hotly contested today. The class fee covers all six sessions.

M	Sep 14, 21, 28, Oct 5, 12, 19	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$72/$82	Zoom

Meteors and Meteor Crater, Arizona with Dr. Stephenie Slahor



Visitors from outer space are in the movies, but the real ones are the meteorites that land on our planet. We'll learn where they might originate, how they make their journey to Earth, where some significant falls have occurred, and how to identify what might be a meteorite.

M	Sep 14	2:00 PM-3:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

A Very British Life: Winston Churchill with Andrew O'Brien



Churchill was considered the greatest man in the world by the time of his death in 1965. This presentation focuses on Churchill's private life: his tremendous capacity for work, his humor, his willingness to take risks, and his intense emotional nature. Born into an aristocratic family, Churchill would change political parties twice! By 1916, his political career was in tatters after the disaster of Gallipoli. From these political margins, he led the calls for rearmament in the face of German aggression. Close to defeat, he would lead Britain to victory. After 1945, Churchill predicted the Cold War. This presentation explores why Churchill is considered one of the most important Brits in the last 100 years.

T	Sep 15	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Joseph Goebbels: The Man Who Seduced a Nation with Anette Isaacs



Few individuals played a more important role in shaping Nazi Germany than Joseph Goebbels, Adolf Hitler's Minister of Propaganda. In this fascinating presentation, German historian Anette Isaacs explores the life and career of Hitler's chief propagandist and examines the methods he used to shape public opinion and maintain support for the Nazi regime. Participants will gain valuable insights into the power of propaganda and its enduring impact on society.

T	Sep 15	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

The Beats with Taylor Hagood



Many people think of the 1950s as the decade of innocent cookie-cutter suburbs, when televisions became a mainstay, filling living rooms with Ed Sullivan and *Leave it to Beaver*. But under that façade, a teeming subculture pulsated that brought edgy new films, rock and roll music, and the Beat Movement. The latter first arose in New York but ultimately centered in San Francisco as a literary style that rebelled against materialistic societal norms in a new syncopation exemplified in the poetry and fiction of Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Jack Kerouac, and many others. In this lecture, Dr. Taylor Hagood, professor of American literature at Florida Atlantic University, will bring the Beat Generation to life, outlining its origins, presenting its featured writers and artists, and reading selections from their work.

W	Sep 16	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

The Webb Space Telescope with J. Kelly Beatty



After 25 years and $10 billion in development, the revolutionary James Webb Space Telescope is now trying to detect the first stars and galaxies to form after the Big Bang and to explore the planets of other stars. Discover how this remarkable observatory is transforming our understanding of the universe. View breathaking images and uncover new scientific discoveries.

W	Sep 16	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Rated R for READ! The Devil Wears Prada with Stephen MacLennan



We will individually read the Lauren Weisberger 2003 novel *The Devil Wears Prada* (400 pages) then gather to watch the David Frankel 2006 movie (rated PG-13, 109m) starring Meryl Streep (AA Best Actress nominee), Anne Hathaway, Emily Blunt, and Stanley Tucci. (Re-)Watching this movie may serve to provide further enjoyment of this year's movie sequel. A smart but sensible young journalist starts working as an assistant to the cynical high-fashion magazine editor Miranda Priestly. [IMDB] Rated R for READ is a casual (reading/audiobook optional) book/movie club that explores story via literature and cinema. Bring your copy of the book or simply show up for the movie and enjoy the post-movie discussion and themed snacks provided.

Th	Sep 17	10:00 AM-1:00 PM	$10/$20	Forté Living 3975 Superior Dr NW

LIFE Book Group with Steve Troutman



Enjoy lively and thoughtful book discussions with fellow readers on the third Friday of each month! Group members suggest and select the books, and discussions are facilitated by Steve Troutman. Please plan to get your own copy of each selected title. Remaining books will be chosen in the spring. The class fee covers all sessions, September-June.

Sep 18 *A Fever in the Heartland* by Timothy Egan
Oct 16 *1984* by George Orwell
Nov 20 *Eleanor* by David Michaelis
Dec 18 *The Showman: Inside the Invasion That Shook the World and Made a Leader of Volodymyr Zelensky* by Simon Shuster
Jan 15 *22 Cells in Nuremberg: In the Nazi Mind* by Douglas Kelley
Feb 19 *An Unfinished Love Story: A Personal History of the 1960s* by Doris Kearns Goodwin

F	Sep 18, Oct 16, Nov 20, Dec 18	9:00 AM-11:00 AM	$40/$50	Zoom

The Great Hinckley Fire of 1894 with John Grabko



The drama of September 1, 1894, in north central Minnesota will not soon be forgotten. Poor logging practices and years of drought made for a tinderbox waiting for a spark! When the spark came, a firestorm exploded and burned 400 square miles in four hours. Havoc and panic reigned throughout the area. Hear the stories of disaster, destruction, survival, and heroism that will be shared. Six towns burned, and greater than 500 people perished before the firestorm burned itself out. Today, the area has recovered, but the firestorm of that day is long remembered in history books and the stories told.

M	Sep 21	1:00 PM-2:15 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

The Highwaymen with Adrienne H. Lee



In the 1950s and 1960s in Ft Pierce, Florida, a group of African American artists emerged who traveled the state selling their paintings out of the trunks of their cars. Mostly self-taught, these painters were not only talented in their craft but also in the art of sales and marketing. This very special presentation celebrates The Highwaymen, a group of 25 men and one woman, who revolutionized the way art was made and sold in the 20th century. With a focus on the unique, dream-like Florida environment, these artists used bold colors and dramatic brushwork to convey deep emotions, creating a lasting nostalgia for a land lost to time and memory.

T	Sep 22	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

What Happened to the Families of the Nazi Elite? with Howard Kerner



With justice meted out to some top Nazis right after World War II, their young descendants had to face the rest of their lives with only photos and memories to comfort them. Common sense might dictate that these surviving family members go on with their lives unimpeded since they had done nothing for which to atone. In this program, however, we will examine the very different, challenging, and surprising post-war lives of the children and grandchildren of the Nazi elite as they wrestle in some unexpected ways with their family legacy, including their infamous last name.

T	Sep 22	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Capote, the Swans, and the 60th Anniversary of the Black and White Ball with Lauren Radick



On November 28, 1966, Truman Capote hosted what many still call the party of the century: the Black and White Ball at The Plaza Hotel. The guest list glittered with stars like Frank Sinatra, Mia Farrow, and Andy Warhol—masked, elegant, and sparkling in black-and-white couture. Fresh off the groundbreaking success of *In Cold Blood*, which revolutionized American writing and the true-crime genre, Capote had cemented his reputation as one of the most innovative literary voices of the 20th century. At the center of his social orbit were his glamorous "Swans"—elegant, impeccably dressed society women such as Babe Paley and Lee Radziwill—whose beauty, wealth, and secrets both fascinated and inspired him. The Ball was as much a tribute to them as it was a bold display of his influence within this rarefied circle. For one unforgettable night, Capote held New York in the palm of his hand, blending history with spectacle, fashion with high drama.

W	Sep 23	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Generational Cycles and the Predicted Crisis with Steve Troutman



Research by two historians/authors identified four distinct, repeating generational archetypes in American history. Each generational archetype brings with it an identifiable set of characteristics (current iterations: Boomers, Gen X, Millennials, Gen Z). Every 20 years or so, the next archetype comes of age, and an old archetype ages out, thereby changing the generational alignment. Each alignment is referred to as a turning. There is a repeating succession of four turnings (i.e., high, awakening, unraveling, crisis) which results in a repeating 80-year cycle. The recurring cycle and turning characteristics enable us to make predictions about cultural attributes and moods. Steve has done this eye-opening and frequently requested presentation for LIFE seven times since 2008, most recently face-to-face in May 2026. This updated presentation will focus on what is predicted for the Crisis Turning and what comes next! It will include a review of the compelling research and the resulting theory of generations, archetypes, turnings, and cycles.

W	Sep 23	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Save the Boundary Waters & the Threat of Copper Nickel Mining with Katilynn Swanson



Learn about Save the Boundary Waters and the fight to permanently protect the watershed of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness from the threat of copper-nickel mining. We'll explore why copper-nickel mining causes water pollution, the impact of that pollution on both the ecosystem and local communities, and what we are doing to protect the wilderness.

Th	Sep 24	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Room H1415

Middle East Conflict Update with Henry Berman



The Middle East Conflict has reached a new intensity in 2026, impacting not only the entire region but also the United States. Global energy markets have been disrupted, and all of us are noting higher prices at the gas pumps. We will examine the implications of all these changes.

Th	Sep 24	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Liberalism and Nationalism with Chad Israelson



This course will cover the two most important ideologies of the 19th Century- Liberalism and Nationalism. We will cover historical development of these concepts, major historical events influenced by them, and their impacts both historically and presently. Among the stops we will make along the way are the Enlightenment, the American, French, and Industrial Revolutions, German & Italian Unification, the World Wars, decolonization, and where the future of these ideas may be headed.

M	Sep 28	1:15 PM-3:15 PM	$15/$25	Room H1415

Saving St. Anthony Falls with John Anfinson



On June 30, 2026, the University of Minnesota's St. Anthony Falls Laboratory submitted its final report on the cutoff wall at St. Anthony Falls to the Minnesota Legislature. Built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1874 and 1876, the cutoff wall lies under the Mississippi River just above the falls, and for 150 years, it has stopped the falls from eroding. In this presentation, John will review the history of saving St. Anthony Falls and provide an update on what the study revealed.

T	Sep 29	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Zoom

Research Vessel Blue Heron: Exploring the Great Lakes with Richard Ricketts



The research vessel (RV) Blue Heron is operated by the University of Minnesota and is the largest university-owned research vessel on the Great Lakes. For the last 28 years, she and her crew have been assisting researchers from around the country in studying the waters of the Great Lakes. This lecture will explore the ship's capabilities, the work she has done, and the future of research on the Great Lakes.

T	Sep 29	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Room H1415

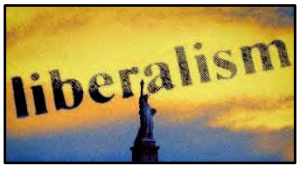
Woodstock: Three Days of Peace and Music with Tom Cimarusti



The date was August 15, 1969, and the place was in Bethel, New York. A three-day concert featuring 24 rock bands and attracting a crowd of nearly 500,000 would forever change the history of popular music. Who was the mastermind of it all? And what was the aftermath? Join Dr. Tom Cimarusti (FGCU Professor of Music History) as he travels back in time to revisit this historic event, its aftermath, and the music of some of the greatest musicians of all time, from Joan Baez to Jimi Hendrix to John Fogerty. You're not going to want to miss this one!

W	Sep 30	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

The Philosophy of Politics: Liberalism and Its Rivals with Brendan Shea



Liberalism is the idea that a government's job is to help its citizens pursue their own idea of the good life. This general philosophy, shared by both left-wing liberals and libertarians, helped inspire movements for democracy, human rights, and good governance for much of the last 200 years. In this talk, we'll look at current "communitarian" challenges to liberalism that have arisen both from left-wing progressives and from cultural conservatives. According to these critics, government should take a much more active role in shaping the lives of their citizens, through restrictions on immigration, higher education, health care, and the media. We'll consider the validity of these criticisms, as well as ways defenders of liberalism can respond.

W	Sep 30	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Room H1415

The Mitford Family: A Tale of Passion and Pathos with Nancy Maxwell



The Mitford family was riddled with eccentricity, but the six Mitford girls were born into a society of confident aristocratic privilege and tradition. The social celebrities of their day, they were destined for lives of security and leisure, even as Europe careened toward war. Shockingly, the Mitford sisters broke rank with their class and became, individually, fervent communists, fascists, or Nazis. Except for one, who became a duchess! And another, who became a world-famous author! Their Mitford story is one of not a little scandal and tragedy, but also a fascinating tale of lives lived with integrity, loyalty, and, surprisingly, plenty of humor.

Th	Oct 1	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Follow LIFE On Facebook

SCAN ME!

Don't miss the Harvest Dinner!

The registration deadline is October 5.

Invite a friend! See page 18 for details.

Headliners with Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell



Meet in person once a month to engage in a thoughtful exchange of ideas, opinions, and information with facilitators Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell. This is a place to flex your brain and find gratification in being acknowledged for what you know and humbled by the knowledge of others. Bring current newspapers, magazine topics or any other topics you would like to discuss. All are welcome; however, please pre-register. Class is limited to the first 12 registered each date to keep the group at a size where everyone will have time to express their thoughts. There is no fee attached to this class.

F	Oct 2	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$0/$0	Room H1305

Galveston: The Ellis Island of the West with Dan Fellner



It's a mostly forgotten but pivotal chapter in Jewish-American history: The Galveston Movement. From 1907-1914, some 10,000 Jews, fleeing religious persecution in Eastern Europe, immigrated to America through the unlikely port of Galveston, Texas. Travel journalist and educator Dan Fellner visited Galveston and met some of the descendants of Jewish immigrants who arrived in Texas more than a century ago and built a new life in the western United States. We'll see the sites related to the Galveston Movement and learn about the island-city's surprisingly robust Jewish community that produced five mayors, prominent business leaders, and two highly renowned rabbis.

T	Oct 6	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Zoom

The Devil's Luck: How Did Hitler Escape Murder? with Howard Kerner



Many of us have wondered how the world's most infamous madman and evildoer, Adolf Hitler, could have possibly survived as long as he did without being killed by his many enemies. The answer is not for a lack of trying. More than 40 different attempts were made over a period of about 25 years. In this course, we will examine those who planned each scheme and the reasons for failure.

T	Oct 6	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Reformation Splendors: Cranach's Wittenberg and Weimar Altars with Kristin Anderson



In this presentation, we'll learn about art in the Reformation era, and then examine two famous sixteenth-century altarpieces by Lucas Cranach the Elder. Over the centuries, they have survived religious controversies, changes in political control, and damage during many wars. Still located in their original settings in Wittenberg and Weimar, these richly detailed paintings used the old tradition of decorated altars as a vehicle to show new ideas developed by Martin Luther during the Reformation. (Reformation Day: October 31)

W	Oct 7	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

The Great Arrangers: Nelson Riddle, Quincy Jones, etc. with Bruce Bowdon



Often, when a song is written, it features music and lyrics accompanied by a piano or guitar. In popular music, there often is an arranger who enriches the song with a combination of instruments and sometimes vocals. Learn how songs like "Ode to Billy Joe," "Wichita Lineman," "God Only Knows," and "Fever" went from idea to record with Bruce Bowdon as he takes examples of arrangers and examines the choices they made so that we can enjoy our favorite songs.

Th	Oct 8	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Room H1415

Russian Film: *Loveless* with Asya Pereltsvaig



Take a deep dive into life in contemporary Russia through the eyes of characters who desperately seek, but fail to find love. With the annexation of Crimea and the war in Ukraine constantly in the background, this 2017 film by Russia's widely-acclaimed contemporary director Andrey Zvyagintsev is eerily prophetic. The winner of the Jury Prize at the Cannes Film Festival, this film is a cinematic masterpiece. We will meet at the Heintz Center on Wednesday, October 7th, to watch the film WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES as a group at 4:00 PM. Bring an appetizer to share, and LIFE will provide the paper products and water. If you can't make the group viewing on the 7th, contact the LIFE main office, and we will assist you in finding a copy of the film on a streaming service. The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

W	Oct 7	4:00 PM - Movie Viewing		Room H1100
Th	Oct 8	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Early Days of the James-Younger Gang with Russ Swanson



Russ Swanson is back to explore the early lives of the members of the James-Younger Gang, one of the most infamous outlaw groups in American history. Russ will trace the story from the gang members' boyhood experiences through their progression into organized crime. The lecture will conclude by recounting the events on the evening before the infamous Northfield, Minnesota bank robbery attempt. By combining well-known historical events with local archival material, Russ will offer a humanized view of the gang and one of the most notorious outlaw stories of the 19th century.

M	Oct 12	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Great Snakes! Rochester's Snake Farm and the Man Behind It with Jeff Sauve

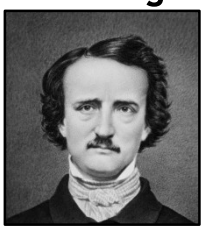


A curious Rochester advertisement once beckoned: "Bring your snakes and get your cash." At the turn of the last century, Orson W. Estes ran the nation's only commercial snake farm, a thriving and often astonishing enterprise. Explore how Estes built a booming reptile trade that supplied circuses, sideshows, museums, and even a buyer in Ireland. Minnesota historian and retired St. Olaf College Archivist Jeff Sauve also traces Estes's rise from snake-struck farm boy to the widely known "Minnesota Snake King." His remarkable story—rooted in showmanship and an enterprising spirit—opens a window onto a chapter of Rochester's past that had all but vanished from memory.

T	Oct 13	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Room H1415

Questions? Call 507-280-3157.

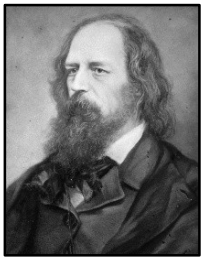
Unraveling the Enigma: Exploring the Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe with Valerie Gugala



Join Valerie for a captivating lecture that delves deep into the fascinating world of one of literature's most enigmatic figures. This lecture offers a comprehensive exploration of Edgar Allan Poe's life, his influences, and the enduring legacy of his literary creations. Attendees will emerge with a newfound appreciation for Edgar Allan Poe's singular contributions to the world of literature and an enhanced understanding of the complexities of his life and work.

T	Oct 13	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Tennyson with Taylor Hagood



Alfred Lord Tennyson was arguably the major poet of Victorian England, literally holding the position of Poet Laureate of the United Kingdom throughout Victoria's reign. Much celebrated during his life and after, Tennyson contributed some of the most memorable and impactful lines in English-speaking literary history. His work spanned both short lyric poetry and long narrative poems, most notably his masterpiece *Idylls of the King*. In this lecture, Dr. Taylor Hagood will present Tennyson's life, work, and impact.

W	Oct 14	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

A Recipe for Longevity: Nutrition Keys to Healthy Aging with Tara Schmidt



This presentation explores the vital role of nutrition in promoting healthy aging and longevity. Participants will review evidence-based dietary patterns, key nutrients, and evolving nutrition needs across the aging spectrum that support muscle health, cognitive function, and chronic disease prevention.

W	Oct 14	1:00 PM-2:00 PM	$10/$20	Room H1415

Protecting Oneself from Misinformation/Disinformation with Lana Medina



Have you ever seen a social media post or headline that was so captivating that you had to share it? Maybe it was a powerful video, a striking image, or a headline that made you stop scrolling. But was it true? In a world where artificial intelligence can generate photos, videos, and even voices, it's becoming harder to know what's real and what isn't. This session will provide practical media and news literacy tools to help you better understand how misleading content is created, amplified, and distributed, and the background factors that shape today's information landscape, including how algorithms and engagement-driven media can increase our vulnerability to false or misleading information.

Th	Oct 15	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Deepfakes with Sam Cole



Deepfakes are the reality-bending technology that everyone has seen, but many have never heard of. AI-generated imagery that morphs one person into another has existed in the mainstream for almost 10 years, and in that time, its uses have become more convincing, widespread, and dangerous. We'll walk through where this tech originated, how it works, the differences between "cheap fakes" and "shallow fakes," and how they prey on our confirmation of biases and most vulnerable populations.

Th	Oct 15	1:00 PM-2:15 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Owls of North America with Dr. Stephenie Slahor



Owls are an integral part of the balance of nature, and over 200 owl species inhabit our earth. We'll look at the anatomical and behavioral characteristics of owls. Next, we'll explore some of North America's 20 species and how they live and hunt in such diverse places as deserts, tundra, and forests.

M Oct 19 1:00 PM-2:30 PM $12/$22 Zoom

One Hit Wonders with Paul Koeller



Join Paul as he uses a presentation with photos and music to tell the stories behind songs that were "One Hit Wonders." You'll know and sing along to every one of these songs, and yet it was the only hit by the artist.

T Oct 20 10:00 AM-12:00 PM $15/$25 Room H1415

Culinaria Germania-The Delicious Dish on German Food with Anette Isaacs



When thinking about German food, bratwurst, sauerkraut, beer, and breads come to mind. German food and drink are well-known and popular all over the world, but there is much more to German cuisine, especially when one takes the regional differences into consideration. Join German Historian Anette Isaacs on a fascinating, fun, and delicious journey through the culinary wonders of her native country.

T Oct 20 1:00 PM-2:30 PM $12/$22 Zoom

From Rapids to Reservoirs & Back Again? with John Anfinson



On July 1, 2025, the University of Minnesota's St. Anthony Falls Laboratory received $427,000 from the Environmental and Natural Resources Trust Fund to model how the Mississippi River would respond to the removal of Lock and Dam No. 1. In this presentation, John will review the Mississippi River's history in the Twin Cities and provide an update on the exciting new information he has learned about the Mississippi River's future with and without locks and dams.

W Oct 21 10:00 AM-11:00 AM $10/$20 Zoom

Celebrities go to War with Ben Rich



We will look at famous Hollywood and sports stars who took time away from very successful careers to serve in our military during armed conflicts, but never received the credit they deserve. Our discussion will include such stars as Jimmy Stewart, Ted Williams, James Earl Jones, and others.

W Oct 21 1:00 PM-2:15 PM $12/$22 Zoom

Harvest Dinner with Sheila Kiscaden



Join us for an unforgettable evening at our annual Harvest Dinner, featuring former State Senator Sheila Kiscaden as this year's keynote speaker. With warmth, humor, and insight, Sheila will share engaging stories and reflections from her remarkable life and career, leaving you inspired. Enjoy a delicious dinner, uplifting entertainment, and camaraderie of fellow LIFE supporters in a festive and welcoming atmosphere. Don't miss this special night of connection and celebration. Doors open at 5:30 pm, with dinner served at 6:00 pm. Registration deadline is October 5th. Please include your entrée selection: Bourbon Glaze Baseball Sirloin, Boursin Chicken, or Butternut Squash Ravioli.

Th Oct 22 5:30 PM-8:00 PM $69/$69 Empire Event Center
1517 16th St SW

Life at the Owatonna State Public School (1886-1945) with Anne Peterson



The State Public School in Owatonna was home to 10,635 dependent, neglected, and orphaned children, and was once the third-largest institution of its kind in the nation. Today, the Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum stands as a one-of-a-kind memorial to that era, founded to "Remember the Children" who lived there. Each child's experience was unique; some found safety and stability, while others endured hardship and trauma. This presentation shares the history of the State School and a selection of those stories.

M	Oct 26	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Room H1415

How Seeds Move with Joel Dunnette



The story of seed movement is as complex as it is fascinating. Seeds have a wide range of ways to move away from their parents, giving them a better chance to grow and thrive. Come see, hear, and feel some of the innovative ways that plant seeds move around. Be prepared to interact with these amazing living things.

M	Oct 26	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Room H1415

Hauntingly Good Art with Adrienne H. Lee



Celebrate spooky season with a frighteningly fun look at the macabre in art! Together, we will discuss panicked paintings, an amazing arachnid, scary skulls, and a dancing skeleton thrown in for good measure. Plus, we will explore the haunting possibility that Jack the Ripper may have been an artist.

T	Oct 27	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Islam in the United States with Sarah Ruble



Many Americans think of Islam as a "new" religion in the United States. But that's not the case. Islam has a long history in the places that became the U.S. In this course, we will do a brief survey of the development of Islam in the 7th century and the jump to the arrival of Muslims in America. We will explore how Islam was portrayed in the colonies and early republic, and explore the various waves of immigration that brought more Muslims to the country. Throughout, we will consider both the opportunities presented to Muslims by the American context as well as the challenges.

T	Oct 27	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

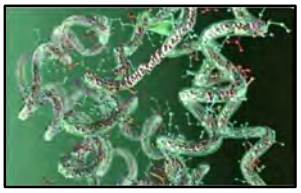
***Gone with the Wind* at 90: The Story That Still Sweeps Us Away with Lauren Radick**



Let's celebrate 90 years of *Gone with the Wind*, the novel that captured a nation's imagination and transformed American storytelling. We will step into the world of Margaret Mitchell—a sharp-witted Atlanta journalist, passionate reader, and accidental novelist—whose Southern upbringing and love of Civil War tales gave rise to Scarlett O'Hara, Rhett Butler, and a story that would define an era. We'll journey with the novel from page to screen, explore its whirlwind success, and discuss its enduring power, controversy, and cultural legacy. 90 years later, *Gone with the Wind* still sweeps us away—and together, we'll discover why.

W	Oct 28	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

When Proteins Get Bent Out of Shape with Heather Sklenicka



Proteins are the hardworking molecules behind everything, from muscle strength to immune support. In this workshop, we'll explore what they're made of, how they fold into their remarkable shapes, and why that structure is so important for keeping our bodies running smoothly. Once the basics are in place, we'll dive into a hands-on experiment to see which everyday compounds can cause a spirulina protein to lose its shape. The goal is to help you look at your next meal—and the molecules in it—a little differently.

W	Oct 28	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Room H1415

Rated R for READ! *Coraline* with Stephen MacLennan



To mark the month containing Halloween, we will individually read the Neil Gaiman 2002 novel *Coraline* (about 200 pp) and then gather to watch the Henry Selick 2009 stop-motion animated (and only slightly scary) movie *Coraline* (PG, 100m), starring Dakota Fanning (voice). Wandering her rambling old house in her boring new town, a young girl discovers a hidden door to a strangely idealized version of her life that seems too good to be true. [IMDB] Rated R for READ is a casual (reading/audiobook optional) book/movie club that explores story via literature and cinema. Bring your copy of the book or simply show up for the movie and enjoy the post-movie discussion and themed snacks provided.

Th	Oct 29	10:00 AM-1:00 PM	$10/$20	Forté Living 3975 Superior Dr NW

Pete Seeger: America's Tuning Fork with Tom Cimarusti



Singer, songwriter, and social activist Pete Seeger dominated American radio in the 1940s and 1950s with hit songs like "Where Have All the Flowers Gone," "If I Had a Hammer," and "Turn, Turn, Turn." From songs of protest to songs that advocated for civil rights, Seeger firmly believed that music could make a difference in social reform. Come join Dr. Tom Cimarusti (FGCU Professor of Music History) as we explore the life and music of one of America's most celebrated folk singers. And of course, don't forget to bring your singing voices as we pay tribute to Seeger in a folk music revival of our very own!

M	Nov 2	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Creation of Italy with Nancy Maxwell



A visitor to Italy today travels freely about to explore the prized cities of Florence, Naples, Rome, and Venice. But it was not always so easy: Italy is a relatively new country, and the fabled cities may indeed be regarded as prizes, because they did not all join Italy willingly! It took a combination of the wily statesman Camillo Cavour, the political activism of the secret revolutionary Giuseppe Mazzini, and the romantic nationalism of Giuseppe Garibaldi – none of whom wanted to work together - to draw disparate "Italians" together. And even that wasn't quite enough. Napoleon III and Bismarck had something to add. This presentation will look at the remarkable personalities and events that led to the emergence of a unified Italy in 1871.

M	Nov 2	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Betting the Farm: A Look at Agriculture in America, From the Inside Out with Beth Hoffman



Beth Hoffman was a veteran food and ag reporter, her husband a farm boy turned chef and butcher, when the two decided to leave San Francisco and head to Iowa. With their extensive agriculture knowledge, the two felt well-equipped to take over his family's farm - that is, until they ran the numbers. The economics of agriculture in the U.S. is a challenge: the majority of America's farms have lost money over the past five years. This lecture will look at the realities of American agriculture through the eyes of a beginning farmer trying to improve farm practices and make a living.

T	Nov 3	10:00 AM-12:00 AM	$15/$25	Zoom

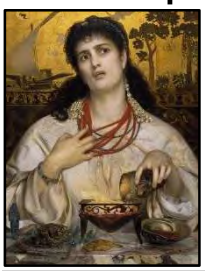
Five Phases of an IRA with Hannah Selness & Sophi Heim



An Individual Retirement Account (IRA) offers valuable tax advantages while you're saving, but taxes don't disappear forever. This workshop explores the five key stages of IRA ownership and highlights opportunities to potentially minimize taxes, maximize retirement income, and create a more efficient legacy for your heirs.

T	Nov 3	1:00 PM-2:00 PM	$10/$20	Room H1415

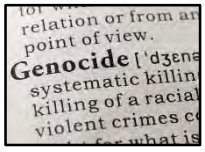
The Pre-Raphaelites with Taylor Hagood



Following up on his lecture on Tennyson, Dr. Taylor Hagood turns to a group of writers and artists heavily influenced by the famous poet: the Pre-Raphaelites. Originally a small group dedicated to a set of artistic principles, the Pre-Raphaelites grew into a loose but powerful informal association that included the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne and the especially fascinating and multi-talented William Morris. This lecture will present this movement, its influences, and its legacy in a mix of images and literary works.

W	Nov 4	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Understanding Genocide Communication with Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi



Genocide is not a spontaneous act but the result of prolonged preparation and persuasion through mass communication. In this lecture, Dr. Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi explores how target groups are identified, dehumanized, and portrayed as threats to justify persecution and violence. Using a survivor's memoir as a case study, participants examine how genocidal communication unfolds in real time. This lecture offers critical historical insight and underscores the continued relevance of these patterns in the world today.

Th	Nov 5	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

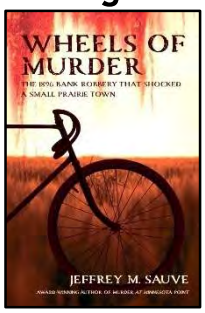
Headliners with Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell



Meet in person once a month to engage in a thoughtful exchange of ideas, opinions, and information with facilitators Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell. This is a place to flex your brain and find gratification in being acknowledged for what you know and humbled by the knowledge of others. Bring current newspapers, magazine topics or any other topics you would like to discuss. All are welcome; however, please pre-register. Class is limited to the first 12 registered each date to keep the group at a size where everyone will have time to express their thoughts. There is no fee attached to this class.

F	Nov 6	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$0/$0	Room H1305

Chasing the Story: How "*Wheels of Murder*" Took Shape with Jeff Sauve



On Oct. 7, 1896, the village of Sherburn in Martin County, Minnesota, was shaken by what the Rochester Daily Post & Record would later call "one of the blackest crimes ever committed." *Wheels of Murder: The 1896 Bank Robbery That Shocked a Small Prairie Town* grew out of a meticulous two-year study of Iowa brothers Hans and Lew Kellihan, the teenage "boy bandits" who carried out the world's first bicycle-borne bank robbery, capturing the attention of the nation. Minnesota historian and retired St. Olaf College Archivist Jeff Sauve traces events of that day and also the tragic ripples that ensued, reflecting the challenges of uncovering a long-forgotten story and shaping it into narrative form. Book available for purchase after lecture (cash only, $20/copy).

M	Nov 9	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Room H1415

Reverse Mortgages: Wonderful or Terrible? with Greg Hoskinson



Home Equity Conversion Mortgages (HECMs) have two separate and distinct reputations, and both are well deserved. In this course, we will discuss both the pros and the cons of reverse mortgages in a factual and unbiased presentation of what this financial tool is, and what it is not.

M	Nov 9	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Room H1415

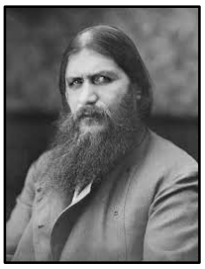
Mississippi River Blues with John Anfinson



There is no origin story for blues music, but many agree that the Mississippi River delta and W.C. Handy are central to its beginnings. A composer, trumpet player, and music producer, Handy's Memphis Blues "would take the U.S. by storm," and according to Robin Banerji, of the BBC, "launched the blues as a mass entertainment genre that would transform popular music worldwide." In this presentation, John will examine the surprising origins of blues music along the Mississippi River and its connections to a post-Civil War cotton plantation and the Hawaiian steel guitar.

T	Nov 10	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Zoom

The Murder of Rasputin: The Whodunnit of the 20th Century with Asya Pereltsvaig



On the night of December 16, 1916, a group of conspirators murdered Grigory Rasputin, Russia's "Mad Monk." While meant to strengthen the Romanov dynasty, this murder brought on their downfall merely two months later and ushered in a year of two revolutions that ended with the Bolshevik takeover of Russia and the eventual murder of the Tsar and his family. In many ways, Russia and the rest of the world are still dealing with the consequences of that murder. This class will shed new light on what happened that night, who killed Rasputin, and what motivated them. Dr. Pereltsvaig will share the results of her latest archival research in British, American, French, and Russian archives and will present her historical novel based on her findings, *Murder in Petrograd*.

T	Nov 10	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Historic Muskego Church with Kristin Anderson



One of the earliest Norwegian American churches built—and the oldest one still standing—the Muskego Church has a fascinating history. Learn about its three locations and multiple uses, from a place of worship to a farm building to a historic site commemorating Norwegian American immigrants and their religious life.

Th	Nov 12	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Minnesota's Hooded History: The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Minnesota with Nancy Vaillancourt



Local historian and retired librarian Nancy Vaillancourt will share her research on the history of the Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Minnesota. Over many years, Nancy has studied the Klan's presence across Southeast Minnesota, revealing how this highly active and visible organization operated in both large and small communities throughout the state. In this presentation, she will explore the Klan's growth, core beliefs, and the varied responses from Minnesota communities. She will also examine the group's eventual decline, including the important role anti-hate efforts played in challenging its influence. Join us for an eye-opening look at this often-overlooked chapter of our region's past and the organized traditions of prejudice and nativism that shaped it.

Th	Nov 12	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Room H1415

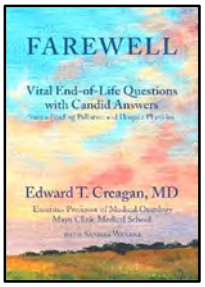
Britain's Tragedy-Titanic: New Evidence About the Sinking/Aftermath with Andrew O'Brien



Recently discovered firsthand accounts from the survivors, as well as discoveries, shed light on a complex tragedy and on all those who tried to manipulate the story. This presentation also focuses on the era when men offered "protection" to women travelling alone. Though "women and children first" did not extend to class, as a result, more male first-class passengers survived than third-class women.

M	Nov 16	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Farewell: Vital End Of Life Questions/Candid Answers with Edward Creagan, MD, FAAHPM



Being at the bedside of a loved one during their final days is an experience that stays with us for a lifetime. Dr. Edward Creagan, will compassionately explain the physical and emotional changes that occur near the end of life, clarify the differences between hospice and palliative care, and discuss proven approaches that enhance comfort, dignity, and quality of life. Participants will gain practical guidance for making informed decisions on behalf of loved ones, better understand topics such as feeding tubes and caregiver stress, and leave with greater confidence in providing compassionate support during one of life's most meaningful transitions.

M	Nov 16	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young with Paul Koeller



Join Paul as he uses a presentation with photos and music to tell the story of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young. You'll learn how these four already famous artists joined together in 1969 to form one of the most famous supergroups. You'll trace their careers in various combinations and as solo artists spanning more than fifty years.

T	Nov 17	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Room H1415

Bring a friend to class. Their first class is free!

Moments That Made America: Turning Points in 250 Years with Valerie Gugala



From independence to innovation, conflict to cultural change, this engaging lecture highlights pivotal events that shaped the course of American history. As the nation marks its 250th birthday, we'll journey through key moments—both celebrated and overlooked—that defined the country's identity, tested its ideals, and propelled it forward. Discover how these turning points continue to influence the America we know today.

T	Nov 17	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

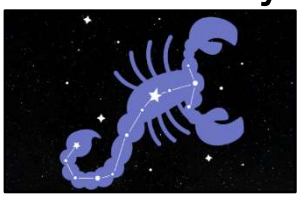
Writers of the Lost Generation: Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Gertrude Stein with Lauren Radick



In the 1920s, Paris buzzed with smoke-filled cafés, midnight conversations, cheap wine, and revolutionary ideas, the world Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Stein entered after World War I. Their friendships, rivalries, and spirited debates sparked a remarkable burst of creativity that would transform literature. This lecture explores Stein's daring modernist experiments, Hemingway's lean, powerful prose, and Fitzgerald's luminous portraits of the Jazz Age—works shaped as much by their interactions and rivalries as by the world around them. Strolling through Montparnasse cafés and Stein's legendary salon, we'll catch glimpses of the wider circle of creatives—figures like Dali, Picasso, Baker, and Joyce—whose presence added to the creative energy of the era. We step into the lives of these literary expatriates as they navigate ambition, disillusionment, glamour, and loss. Together, we experience the friendships, rivalries, and debates that gave rise to some of the 20th century's most enduring masterpieces that still resonate today.

W	Nov 18	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

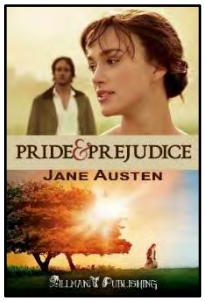
The Stars of Harry Potter with J. Kelly Beatty



J.K. Rowling named many of the characters in her blockbuster series after well-known stars and constellations. So why not learn the celestial stories behind these names? Discover the fascinating myths, history, and astronomy that inspired names like Sirius, Bellatrix, Draco, and Regulus, and see how Rowling wove the night sky into the magical world of Hogwarts. Whether you're a Harry Potter fan, a stargazer, or simply curious, you'll never look at the constellations the same way again.

W	Nov 18	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Rated R for READ! *Pride and Prejudice* with Stephen MacLennan



We will individually read Jane Austen's 1813 second novel *Pride and Prejudice* (about 400 pp) and then gather to watch the Joe Wright 2005 movie (PG, 129m) starring Keira Knightley (AA Best Actress nominee) and Matthew Macfadyen. When Elizabeth Bennet meets the handsome Mr. Darcy, she believes he is the last man she could ever marry, but as their lives become intertwined, she finds herself captivated by the man she has sworn to hate forever. [IMDB] Rated R for READ is a casual (reading/audiobook optional) book/movie club that explores story via literature and cinema. Bring your copy of the book or simply show up for the movie and enjoy the post-movie discussion and themed snacks provided.

Th	Nov 19	10:00 AM-1:00 PM	$10/$20	Forté Living 3975 Superior Dr NW

Silver and Calico Silver Strike with Dr. Stephenie Slahor



Silver has countless uses in art, utensils, electronic devices, and more. We'll explore how it forms and is processed, and we'll take a look at Southern California's richest silver strike at Calico, where millions of dollars' worth of silver was (and still is) mined!

Th	Nov 19	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Air Traffic Control Part 1 - The First 70 Years (1903-1973) with Ben Rich



Explore the first 70 years of Air Traffic Control (ATC) from the Wright Brothers' first flight in 1903 to the massive ATC expansion of the 1930s-1950s, and look at the people who made this possible. We will dive into the transition from a Non-Radar environment to constant Radar monitoring and the innovations made necessary by the introduction of jet transports like the Boeing 707 and DC-8. Finally, we will examine how airspace capacity increased while the highest safety standards continue to be met.

M	Nov 23	10:00 AM-11:15 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Air Traffic Control Part 2 - The Next 53 Years (1973-2026) with Ben Rich



The 1970s saw massive introductions of technologies that helped both the ATC Specialist and the aircrew. The adoption of satellite technology greatly enhanced the control of oceanic flights as well as aircraft in remote areas with little or no Radar coverage.

M	Nov 23	11:30 AM-12:45 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

John Wayne Gacy: The Killer Clown Unmasked with Michelle Gibbons



Step into the twisted world of one of America's most notorious serial killers, John Wayne Gacy. Known as the "Killer Clown," Gacy appeared to be a model citizen—active in his community, a successful contractor, and even a children's entertainer. But behind the mask of his carefully crafted public persona lurked a predator responsible for the brutal deaths of 33 young men. In this gripping lecture, historical presenter Michelle Gibbons will peel back the layers of Gacy's seemingly normal life to reveal the chilling truths hidden beneath.

M	Nov 23	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Who was Hilma of Klint with Adrienne H. Lee



Hilma of Klint was a talented Swedish artist whose public work was the height of conventional realism at the dawn of the 20th century. Decades after her death, a treasure trove of paintings and works on paper revealed an artist who created monumental abstracts in daring colors inspired by spiritual guides from another realm. These works predate the modernist paintings of Wassily Kandinsky, Piet Mondrian, and Kazimir Malevich, considered the forefathers of the abstract avant-garde. What do these paintings mean and why did she work in secret? Is the world finally ready to accept the secret paintings of Hilma of Klint?

T	Nov 24	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

Jewish Life in Germany Today with Anette Isaacs



Embark on an insightful exploration of present-day Jewish life in Germany with historian Anette Isaacs. Eight decades after World War II, Germany stands as home to the third-largest Jewish community in Europe. This straightforward and thoughtful perspective on various aspects of Jewish life, will guide you through complexities and realities while shedding light on the resilience and growth of this community within the context of Germany's post-war history.

T	Nov 24	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Giuseppe and Carl, Who? The Forgotten Origins of the Classical Symphony with Tom Cimarusti



Have you ever wondered who wrote symphonies before Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven? Who invented it and what brought about its popularity? How and where did the symphony develop? In this course, we will survey several works that led to the development of one of the most important genres in classical music. We will also examine how these earlier works influenced the symphonies of the great masters such as Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven.

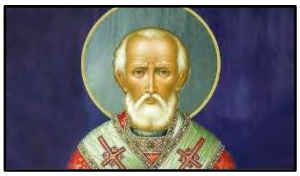
M	Nov 30	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

What's New & Old at the History Center of Olmsted County with Valerie Wassmer

Join Executive Director Valerie Wassmer for a look at the exciting work happening behind the scenes to preserve our community's past while preparing for its future. Learn about recent restoration projects, ongoing preservation efforts, and plans for the future. Valerie will also share fascinating stories behind some of the History Center's most unique artifacts and photographs, revealing how ordinary objects can tell extraordinary stories about the people, places, and events that shaped Olmsted County. Whether you're a lifelong history enthusiast or simply curious about our local heritage, you'll leave with a deeper appreciation for the treasures that connect us to our past.

M	Nov 30	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Room H1415

The Many Faces of St. Nicholas: From the Bishop of Myra to Santa Claus with Kristin Anderson



A popular saint across Christian history, St. Nicholas of Myra was—and still is—represented in a traditional religious context. Yet the many images of St. Nicholas are far surpassed in number and variety by the more recent portrayals of Old St. Nick. With lots of images, old and new, we'll see the transformation of St. Nicholas over many centuries, from early Christian saint to modern holiday icon. (St. Nicholas Day: December 6)

T	Dec 1	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Louis XIV - The Sun King with Nancy Maxwell



King of France from the age of four, Louis grew to epitomize, very intentionally, the image of absolute monarchy in 17th century Europe. His creation - the magnificent palace of Versailles and its brilliant, glamorous attendant court – became the envy of Europe. This glitter and brilliance was built on a rigid protocol, a grueling routine and schedule of public appearances, and daily commitments to government that make the head spin! Only one such as the Sun King could manage it! This lecture explores the many colorful and intriguing aspects of Louis XIV – his talents and his foibles – as well as the lasting effects of his reign.

W	Dec 2	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom



The Why and How of Sleep and Making it Better with Dr. Stephenie Slahor



Sleep is a necessity for good health and survival. We'll explore the stages of sleep, the importance of restful and restorative sleep, why we dream, and how to achieve better sleep.

Th	Dec 3	1:00 PM-2:30 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Headliners with Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell



Meet in person once a month to engage in a thoughtful exchange of ideas, opinions, and information with facilitators Steve Frytak and Phil Karsell. This is a place to flex your brain and find gratification in being acknowledged for what you know and humbled by the knowledge of others. Bring current newspapers, magazine topics or any other topics you would like to discuss. All are welcome; however, please pre-register. Class is limited to the first 12 registered each date to keep the group at a size where everyone will have time to express their thoughts. There is no fee attached to this class.

F	Dec 4	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$0/$0	Room H1305

Motown: The Rise and Fall of a Musical Empire with Tom Cimarusti

Founded by Berry Gordy in 1959, the American record label Motown produced some of the most iconic artists/bands in popular music, such as Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, The Supremes, and many others. As such, the company played a key role in the racial integration of popular music by an African American-owned label that successfully reached a white audience. Come explore the music of this legendary record label as Dr. Thomas M. Cimarusti (FGCU Professor of Music History) explores some of the greatest Motown hits as well as the company's rise to fame and eventual downfall.

M	Dec 7	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

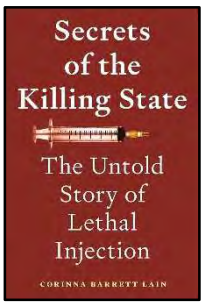
Eating for Brain Health with Victoria May



Join Victoria to learn more about diet and cognitive aging. She will discuss different topics, including the Mediterranean and MIND diets, omega-3 fats, antioxidants, blood sugar control, and lifestyle habits that support brain health.

M	Dec 7	1:00 PM-2:00 PM	$10/$20	Zoom

Secrets of the Killing State: The Untold Story of Lethal Injection with Corinna Barrett Lain



In this presentation Lain pulls back the curtain of secrecy, presenting a view of lethal injection that states have worked hard to hide. In the popular imagination, lethal injection is a slight pinch and a swift nodding off to forever-sleep. It is performed by well-qualified medical professionals. It is regulated, carefully conducted, and it is the most "humane" form of capital punishment. In reality, not one of those things is true. The story of lethal injection is a story of state law-breaking and cover-ups, fake science and torturous drugs, gross incompetence by woefully inept executioners, and a stunning indifference to the way prisoners die at the hands of the state. Lain's meticulously researched and utterly compelling exposé takes readers on an unprecedented journey into the notoriously secretive world of American executions, using shocking revelations about lethal injection to shine a light on the American death penalty more broadly.

T	Dec 8	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

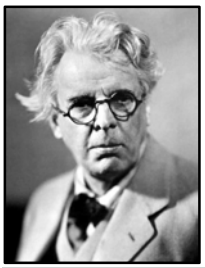
She Could Make a Bishop Forget His Prayers: The Life of Mary Lincoln with Valerie Gugala



Valerie will provide an in-depth look into the complex and multifaceted life of Mary Lincoln, wife of President Abraham Lincoln. It explores her upbringing, education, and the social and political environment that shaped her. The lecture examines her marriage to Abraham, her role as First Lady, and the controversies and personal tragedies she endured. Through a detailed narrative, the lecture paints a vivid portrait of Mary Lincoln's strength, resilience, and influence, while also addressing her struggles with mental health and public perception.

T	Dec 8	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

William Butler Yeats with Taylor Hagood



Dr. Taylor Hagood concludes the fall series of British literature by presenting the life and work of the Irish poet, William Butler Yeats. Just as the Pre-Raphaelites were influenced by Tennyson, so Yeats was heavily influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites in his earliest years as a poet. But from that beginning, he developed his poetic vision in directions that helped blaze a trail into Modernism itself, culminating in his winning the 1923 Nobel Prize in Literature. Yeats's work and fascinating life will come into full dimension and color in this lecture.

W	Dec 9	10:00 AM-12:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

Russian Film: *The Irony of Fate* with Asya Pereltsvaig



In this class, we'll immerse ourselves in the Russian New Year's Eve traditions of decorating a New Year's Eve tree, making mayo-rich salads, going to the bathhouse… and watching *The Irony of Fate*. In the center of the film's story is a love triangle between middle-aged characters, whose lives change serendipitously on a magical New Year's Eve night. This Soviet classic is a joyful comedy about love, happiness, fate, and a satire of the Soviet sameness and conformism. We will meet at the Heintz Center on Tuesday, December 8th, to watch the film WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES as a group at 4:00 PM. Bring an appetizer to share, and LIFE will provide the paper products and water. If you can't make the group viewing on the 8th, contact the LIFE main office, and we will assist you in finding a copy of the film on a streaming service. The class will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

T	Dec 8	4:00 PM - Movie Viewing		Room H1100
W	Dec 9	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

The Great River Road as the "Happiness Highway" with John Anfinson



In 1937, Missouri conducted a study to determine the best recreational opportunities for its residents. Based on its study, the state's planning board recommended establishing a parkway along the Mississippi River. Governor Lloyd Stark then directed A. P. Greensfelder, who led the study, to pursue it. Greensfelder called the parkway the "Happiness Highway" and convinced the other nine Mississippi River states to join Missouri. Today, the Great River Road runs from the Mississippi River's source at Lake Itasca, Minnesota to Venice, Louisiana, some 75 miles below New Orleans. In this presentation, John will connect the Great River Road to the growth of automobile production and ownership and to America's love for road trips.

Th	Dec 10	10:00 AM-11:00 AM	$10/$20	Zoom

Early Theologians You Should Know with Sarah Ruble



Christian theology can seem overly complicated and strangely detailed. How did people get from a wandering preacher in the first century to a doctrine of the Trinity? Why did a story about people eating fruit in a garden become a doctrine of original sin? In this course, we will look at four theologians and the context around some of their most important ideas.

Th	Dec 10	1:00 PM-3:00 PM	$15/$25	Zoom

America Loves Lucy: The Red-Headed Queen of Comedy with Michelle Gibbons



During the Golden Age of television, Lucille Ball became a comedic icon. With her signature red hair, big personality, and witty humor, Lucy would make Americans everywhere laugh. To this day, one thing is for sure: people everywhere still love Lucy. Learn about the life and stardom of the iconic Lucille Ball, presented by historical presenter Michelle Gibbons.

M	Dec 14	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

The Amazing Life & Times and Early Demise of Music Legend Glenn Miller with John Grabko



Glenn Miller was an American musician, composer, and Big Band leader who hit the top of the hit parade between the years of 1938 and 1944. We will explore his life as a young man and follow his career to the top of the industry. We will include some of his timeless hits, such as "In The Mood," "Chattanooga Choo Choo," "Moonlight Serenade," and more! We will follow Major Glenn Miller into the war years and discuss his loss over the English Channel. Gone, but his music will last forever!

M	Dec 14	1:00 PM-2:15 PM	$12/$22	Zoom

Who was Marc Chagall? with Adrienne H. Lee



An artist whose work defies categorization, Marc Chagall worked in a variety of mediums including painting, stained glass, murals, theatrical stage design, and more. Living for nearly a century and surviving both world wars and the Russian Revolution, Chagall's work is infused with whimsy, fantasy, and dreamlike scenarios. Incorporating elements of his Jewish faith and his love of the circus, each artwork loving crafted by Marc Chagall speaks volumes to the poet inside all of us.

T	Dec 15	10:00 AM-11:30 AM	$12/$22	Zoom

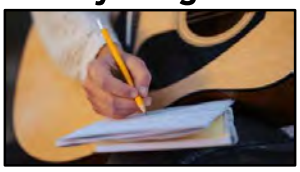
The Tainted Legacy of Richard Wagner with Anette Isaacs



To some, he is the creator of divine music; to others, he is history's most controversial composer: Richard Wagner and his legacy that was tainted by both his own difficult personality and the usurpation of his music by Adolf Hitler, are still topics of lively debate. Join Historian Anette Isaacs for a fascinating discussion of how the music and the legacy of Richard Wagner are received in her native country, Germany, today.

T Dec 15 1:00 PM-2:30 PM $12/$22 Zoom

History Songs with Paul Koeller



Join Paul as he uses a presentation with photos and music to share songs that are based on historical events. You'll leave knowing more about history and the artists who wrote these historical songs.

W Dec 16 10:00 AM-12:00 PM $15/$25 Room H1415

The Great Christmas Extravaganza! with Bruce Bowdon



Bruce Bowdon will present the stories and personalities behind Christmas music we love, the songs we've cherished for years, the ones we've forgotten, the hidden gems we haven't discovered, and even a few we hoped we'd never hear again! Dust off your ugly Christmas sweater, grab your Rudolph nose and Santa hat as you get ready for an afternoon of music, memories, and laughter. The fun starts with a social at 12:30 pm. Come enjoy light appetizers, non-alcoholic beverages, and Christmas cookies while you mix, mingle, and soak up the holiday cheer before the program begins at 1:00 pm!

W Dec 16 12:30 PM-3:00 PM $20/$30 Room H1100

Rated R For READ! *The Christmas Carol* with Stephen MacLennan



To mark the holiday season, we will individually read Charles Dickens 1843 novella *A Christmas Carol* (about 70 pp) and then gather to watch the Brian Desmond Hurst 1951 movie (G, 86m) starring Alastair Sim, considered by many the definitive adaptation. Ebeneezer Scrooge, a curmudgeonly, miserly businessman, has no time for sentimentality and largely views Christmas as a waste of time. However, this Christmas Eve, he will be visited by three spirits who will show him the error of his ways. [IMDB] Rated R for READ is a casual (reading/audiobook optional) book/movie club that explores story via literature and cinema. Bring your copy of the book or simply show up for the movie and enjoy the post-movie discussion and themed snacks provided.

Th Dec 17 10:00 AM-1:00 PM $10/$20 Forté Living
3975 Superior Dr NW



Your Ideas Help Shape LIFE

Many of the classes and presenters featured in this catalog begin with a suggestion from our LIFE members. Your curiosity, interests, and questions help guide the topics we explore and the learning opportunities we create.

Have a topic you'd like to see offered? Know of a presenter who would be a great fit for LIFE? We'd love to hear from you! Your ideas help us continue to bring engaging, relevant, and meaningful learning experiences to our community.

Instructor Biographies

Our LIFE presenters bring a wide range of knowledge, experience, and passion to every class. From historians and authors, to scientists, artists, and community experts, each presenter brings something unique to share.

We invite you to explore the stories, backgrounds, and expertise of the people who make LIFE a place for curiosity, conversation, and lifelong learning.



Dr. Kristin Anderson is a Professor Emerita of Art and Design at Augsburg University in Minneapolis. Her courses included art history and architectural history surveys as well as more specialized offerings such as American Art, Scandinavian Art, and Women and Art. A graduate of Oberlin College, Kristin has master's degrees in art history (University of Minnesota) and church history (Luther Seminary) as well as a Ph.D. in American Art, Architecture, and Popular Culture from the University of Minnesota. **Page 15, 22, 26.**



Dr. John O. Anfinson has been researching, writing, and speaking about the upper Mississippi River for over 30 years. He spent the first half of his federal career with the St. Paul District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as a historian and cultural resources program manager. He joined the Mississippi National River and Recreation Area, a unit of the National Park Service, in 2000, where he served as Superintendent from 2014-2020. John is the author of *The River We Have Wrought: A History of the Upper Mississippi* (2003) and *River of History* (2003). John holds a Ph.D. in U.S. History from the University of Minnesota. **Page 13, 18, 22, 29.**



Dr. Connie Arzigian is an Emeritus with the Archaeology and Anthropology Department at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse, and Senior Researcher with the Mississippi Valley Archaeology Center at UWL. Her research is on Midwestern archaeology and paleoecology, examining subsistence and settlement systems, and the origins of agriculture. In addition, she teaches about biological anthropology and how our species has emerged and thrived. **Page 9.**



Corinna Barrett Lain is the George E. Allen Chair in Law at the University of Richmond School of Law. She is one of the nation's leading authorities on the death penalty and is a frequent presenter at both national and international conferences. Lain's work has appeared in the most prestigious law journals in the country and has been cited in a concurring opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court. She is the author of the 2025 book *Secrets of the Killing State: the Untold Story of Lethal Injection* , which was named as a finalist in the 2026 Next Gen Indy Book Awards in the social justice category. **Page 28.**



J. Kelly Beatty is an award-winning science journalist and astronomer. During the 1980s he was among the first Western journalists to gain direct access to the Soviet space program. Kelly is a former Senior Editor of *Sky & Telescope* magazine (serving over 40 years) and former editor of *Night Sky* magazine. Now retired from the magazine, he remains actively involved in many *Sky & Telescope* articles, tours, and other projects. He holds a bachelor's degree in geology from the California Institute of Technology and a Master's degree in science journalism. Specializing in planetary science and space exploration, Kelly conceived and edited *The New Solar System*, considered a standard reference among planetary scientists. **Page 11, 24.**



Richard Bell is Professor of History at the University of Maryland and author of *Stolen: Five Free Boys Kidnapped into Slavery and their Astonishing Odyssey Home* which was a finalist for the George Washington Prize and the Harriet Tubman Prize. He has held major research fellowships at Yale, Cambridge, and the Library of Congress and is the recipient of the National Endowment of the Humanities Public Scholar award and the 2021 Andrew Carnegie Fellowship. He is a Trustee of the Maryland Center for History and Culture and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society. **Page 5, 10.**



Henry Berman is a retired businessman, working for 34 years at Ecolab, a global company based in St Paul. He has been a prominent member of the Great Decisions Speaker's Bureau for seven years, with a strong interest in the Middle East, Africa, and the emerging nations of Asia. He has given presentations on such varied topics as Saudi Arabia, the Future of the Kurds, Red Sea Security, South Africa's Legacy of Apartheid, and China in Africa. He has also been a teacher at OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Minnesota) for three years. Courses he has created and led include the Middle East Conflict, the Horn of Africa, and the Philippines-U.S. Relationship. **Page 13.**



Bruce Bowdon taught middle school music in Cincinnati for 43 years - all at the same school - and later spent six years teaching at OLLI Cincinnati. In a former life, he worked as a cocktail pianist and has written songs that have earned him dozens of dollars in royalties. Bruce firmly believes he's a great songwriter, despite mounting evidence to the contrary. Still, there are at least 25 people who agree with him. **Page 16, 30.**



Dr. Tom Cimarusti, a native of Los Angeles, received his Ph.D. at Florida State University where he defended his dissertation concerning 19th-century Italian song. He has presented his research at conferences in Europe, Asia, and the United States. He is currently working on an edition of hymns associated with the late 19th-century religious cult, the Koreshan Unity. He has been the recipient of numerous research grants and excellence in teaching awards. As an avid accordionist, he is also active in the performance of the traditional music of Argentina (tango), Italy (work songs), and the USA (zydeco). He lives in Naples, FL with his wife Christy, and two boys, Paul and Christopher. **Page 14, 20, 26, 27.**



Sam Cole is a journalist and co-founder of the independent technology news outlet 404 Media. She was previously a senior editor for *Motherboard*, Vice's technology outlet, and has worked as a journalist for over a decade at outlets including Popular Science, Fast Company, and Al Jazeera. In 2022, she published *How Sex Changed the Internet and the Internet Changed Sex: An Unexpected History*. **Page 17.**



Dr. Edward Creagan is a medical oncologist who practiced at Mayo Clinic for more than forty Minnesota winters until he transitioned into the orbit of digital health and health information in 2018. He was the first Mayo Clinic consultant board-certified in hospice and palliative medicine. Dr. Ed received the Distinguished Mayo Clinician Award—Mayo Clinic's highest honor. He also completed an elected term as President of the Mayo Staff. He is the author of the triple award-winning book *How Not to Be My Patient: A Physician's Secrets for Staying Healthy and Surviving Any Diagnosis* . His second book is about death and dying issues, titled *Farewell*, and provides answers to vital end-of-life questions. He blogs regularly on his website, AskDoctorEd.com, and can be followed daily on Instagram, X, and TikTok. **Page 7, 23.**



Joel Dunnette is a MN Master Naturalist and volutneer instructor. Joel leads butterfly counts and dragonfly and general "bug hunts" and is an advocate for recognizing the wonder and importance of insects in our world. **Page 7, 19.**



Dan Fellner is a seven-time Fulbright fellow with over 35 years of experience in corporate public relations, television news, travel writing and university teaching in the United States, Eastern Europe and Southeast Asia. Fellner began his career as a television news and sports reporter at stations in four different American cities. He later spent 10 years in corporate public relations. In 1998, Fellner joined Arizona State University (ASU) as a faculty associate and has taught courses in print and broadcast journalism, public relations, international mass media, intercultural communications and travel writing. Fellner is a faculty affiliate with ASU's Melikian Center for Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies, and currently teaches courses in travel writing, Eastern Europe, Asia, and other foreign destinations for ASU's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. Fellner is a three-time Fulbright Scholar (Latvia, Moldova and Bulgaria) and four-time Fulbright Senior Specialist (North Macedonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Indonesia). He also works as a travel writer and has published more than 85 travel articles in publications around the world. **Page 15.**



Dr. Stephen Frytak is a retired Mayo Medical Oncologist. He previously served on the Learning Is ForEver (LIFE) Board. **Page 5, 8, 15, 21, 27.**



Michelle Gibbons, historical presenter and owner of Michelle Gibbons Presents, is on a mission to revolutionize the way we experience history. By combining her infectious energy and passion for storytelling, Michelle creates an immersive experience that reshapes how we understand and appreciate the past, making history come alive to modern audiences. Michelle began this journey in 2019. She graduated from Northern Illinois University in 2008 with majors in Journalism and English and a minor in Political Science. She worked as an editor, staff reporter, and freelance writer for local and nationwide newspapers and a worldwide magazine for over 15 years. Her goal is to not only teach the important parts of history but to help others learn its value in today's society. **Page 25, 29.**



John Grabko retired in 2013 from the Minnesota Historical Society after a decade of preserving and sharing Minnesota's history. He also worked as a seasonal state park naturalist with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. In addition, John spent 10 years with the Rochester, MN, Convention & Visitors Bureau, traveling the world promoting tourism. Today, John is the president and founder of Historic Adventure & Travel Tours, a history-based tour company that shares America's story with adventure travelers. **Page 12, 29.**



Valerie Gugala has been studying the Lincoln Family for more than 50 years. Her interest in the Lincolns led her to an interest in the Presidents, First Ladies, and their families. Over the last 25 years, Valerie has spoken at libraries, schools, churches, senior groups, and park districts throughout the country. She loves to share her knowledge of and enthusiasm for our country's history with audiences. She has a background in theatre, as she was the co-producer for the Bartlett Park District Theatre Program for over 10 years, and worked with The Mystery Shop, a traveling mystery theatre company, from 2001 to 2020. Valerie lives in Bartlett, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, with her husband Brian, son Steven, and two Siamese cats, Rajah & Jasmine. **Page 8, 17, 24, 28.**



Taylor Hagood has been lecturing in the LIFE program since 2021. A professor of American literature at Florida Atlantic University, he lectures on a range of topics in literature, art, music, history, and travel. He is the author of multiple books, including the biography/true crime *Stringbean: The Life and Murder of a Country Music Legend*; *Faulkner's Imperialism: Space, Place, and the Materiality of Myth*; *Secrecy, Magic, and the One-Act Plays of Harlem Renaissance Women Writers*; and *Faulkner, Writer of Disability*, winner of the C. Hugh Holman Award for Best Book in Southern Studies. **Page 11, 17, 21, 28.**



Renee Hobbs is a leading scholar of media literacy education, whose work examines propaganda, disinformation, and the critical analysis of news and popular media. A professor at University of Rhode Island and founder of the Media Education Center Lab, she is the author of 12 books and hundreds of scholarly articles, including *Mind over Media: Propaganda Education in a Digital Age*, winner of the 2021 Prose Award for Excellence in the Social Sciences from the American Association of Publishers. Learn more: www.mediaeducationlab.com **Page 9.**



Beth Hoffman is a journalist, author and farmer who lives on the farm in south central Iowa with her husband and a menagerie of animals. The couple raises grass finished beef and goats, offers cooking and writing classes and overnight farm stays. Beth is also the Story Coordinator and Producer/Host of At the *Iowa Farm Table* Podcast, a production of the Iowa Food System Coalition. **Page 21.**



Greg Hoskinson is a recent Minnesota resident who spent 50 years as an Investment Banker and Mortgage Banker in Denver, Colorado. At E.F. Hutton and Thomson Reuters, he was primarily involved with municipal financing of bond issues used for providing low-interest rate mortgages to low- and middle-income households, and supporting FNMA, FHLMC, and GNMA in analyzing their mortgage-backed securities. For the last 30 years, he owned Sterling Mortgage, a small provider of residential mortgages throughout Colorado, including Reverse Mortgages when they became available through Housing and Urban Development. He is proud to have been a very early "FHA Approved Counselor" providing information to applicants seeking Reverse Mortgages. **Page 22.**



Anette Isaacs, German-born and raised, is a historian, public educator, and prominent leader in lifelong learning in South Florida. She has presented hundreds of programs throughout the United States on more than 50 topics focused on the history, politics, and culture of her native Germany. She holds Master's degrees in American Studies, Political Science, and History. **Page 10, 18, 26, 30.**



Chad Israelson received his BA from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and his MA from the University of Nebraska. Israelson has taught at Rochester Community and Technical College since 1996. He has also taught at UW-La Crosse, Augsburg, and Winona State. Chad won Outstanding Educator in 2003 and 2012. Chad coauthored the book *The Political World of Bob Dylan: Freedom and Justice, Power, and Sin* and has authored *Kings of North: Photographs and History of the Minnesota Vikings*; *Football and Family: The Justin Jefferson Story*; and *Small Town, Big Dreams: The Kirill Kaprizov Story*. **Page 13.**



Dr. Phil Karsell is a retired Mayo physician. His interests include volunteer medicine for the Salvation Army and, recently in Guatemala, making wooden toys for the Ronald McDonald House, nature photography, grandchildren, and lifelong learning (science, history, and philosophy). **Page 5, 8, 15, 21, 27.**



Howard Kerner received his BA and MA in English from the State University of NY at Albany and did additional graduate work towards his Ph.D. at the University of Virginia. Howard has taught at the high school, college, and university levels for 47 years, has lectured extensively, and has published over 700 articles, many on the Holocaust. His passion project since retirement is researching and sharing uplifting and inspiring stories of human goodness during the Holocaust. **Page 12, 15.**

Don't miss the Harvest Dinner with Sheila Kiscaden!

Thursday, October 22

See page 18 for details.



Sheila Kiscaden moved to Rochester in 1970 and has been an active resident and community member ever since. Sheila's career focused on human services, including managing non-profits, serving Olmsted County as a human services planner and its legislative liaison, providing organizational development consulting, and serving in higher education as an adjunct faculty member. Her career experiences led to her being recruited to run for election to the Minnesota State Senate (1992-2006) and to serve as an Olmsted County Commissioner (2012-2024). Along the way, she earned a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Southern California, and was awarded a Bush Fellowship, which she used to earn a Master's Degree in Participation, Development and Social Change from the University of Sussex. Sheila continues to be actively engaged as a volunteer on a variety of local and state issues. She describes herself as "a community elder engaged in public policy." **Page 18.**



Paul Koeller is a retired IBMer and active Mayo Volunteer who loves researching and presenting music and local history topics. Paul has given numerous history presentations in Rochester and presented about twenty different rock music classes for Rochester Community Education and RCTC's LIFE program. Paul also loves traveling and gardening. **Page 18, 23, 30.**



Dr. Emilie Le Beau Lucchesi, Ph.D. is an author and journalist in Illinois. She is a regular contributor to *Discover Magazine*. Her work has also appeared in *National Geographic*, *USA Today*, *The New York Times*, and *The Atlantic*. She is the author of *Ugly Prey: An Innocent Woman and the Death Sentence that Scandalized Jazz Age Chicago* (Chicago Review, 2017) and *This is Really War: The Incredible True Story of a Navy Nurse POW in the Occupied Philippines* (Chicago Review, 2019). She is the co-author of *A Light in the Dark: Surviving More than Ted Bundy* with survivor Kathy Kleiner Rubin (Chicago Review, 2023). **Page 9, 21.**



Adrienne H. Lee is an art historian and writer who is brand new to Minnesota. Known publicly as The Wandering Art Historian, she spent the last eight years giving lectures, teaching classes, and hosting art-inspired book club discussions all over the state of Florida. Ms. Lee is an avid reader and writer of both fiction and non-fiction, and she published her debut novel in January of 2024. **Page 12, 19, 25, 29.**



Stephen MacLennan is a retired electrical engineer and mathematician who worked 30 years in the field of digital signal processing in the Twin Cities, then taught high school mathematics at Wayzata and Eagle Ridge Academy (Minnetonka) and coached the Minnesota High School All-State Math Team. Throughout he kept books of poetry, stories, essays, novels, and plays nearby for society and solace. In 2024 he and his wife Mai moved to Rochester, where he now enjoys literature, mathematics, music, and tennis. **Page 5, 6, 8, 11, 20, 24, 30.**



Nancy Maxwell spent much of her childhood in a variety of places like Ecuador, Iran, Haiti, Kenya, and Bermuda. At Cornell University, she was encouraged to major in Psychology, but her interest in humanities has always been paramount. As a teacher and counselor in an international school in Switzerland for more than 20 years, she had the opportunity to familiarize herself with the palaces and cathedrals of European cities. Having had the chance to walk the corridors of the Palace of Versailles and the streets of Paris facilitates one's ability to identify with the challenges of both the privileged and wealthy as well as the deprived and impoverished. The historian and the counselor merge in the pursuit of humanity. 20 years in secondary education in Connecticut refamiliarized Nancy with American life and history, serving to increase the depth of her fascination with the human condition. Nancy has made it her business to discover both a mental and physical context in which such people who lived centuries ago regain their humanity and tell their stories. It is her delight to share those stories with students. **Page 14, 20, 26.**



Victoria May is a Dietetic Intern with the Mayo Clinic School of Health Sciences. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Dietetics with a minor in Exercise and Sport Science from the University of Georgia and is completing her Master of Science in Nutritional Sciences with a focus in Community Nutrition. Victoria is passionate about helping individuals improve their health and quality of life through practical, evidence-based nutrition strategies. She enjoys empowering people to make sustainable nutrition choices that support lifelong health and well-being. **Page 27.**



Dr. Lana Medina, Ph.D., is a regional Emmy award winning journalist, award winning researcher, and educator. Her work explores how social media algorithms, AI, and newsroom pressures shape local journalism and civic discourse. She has been recognized with two national awards from AEJMC's Media Ethics Division and the Clifford G. Christians Ethics Research Award from the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics. Before entering academia, she worked as a newspaper reporter and television news producer, experiences that influence her teaching and mentorship. At the University of St. Thomas, Dr. Medina teaches a range of courses, guiding students to navigate our evolving digital media landscape with integrity and critical insight. **Page 17.**

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Andrew O'Brien was born in England and graduated with a Bachelor's and Master's degree in History from Oxford University. Andrew also has a teaching degree from London University and a Master's degree in teaching from Johns Hopkins University. After teaching school in several locations in the UK, Andrew presented just under four hundred lectures to life long learning communities. **Page 10, 23.**



Dr. Asya Pereltsvaig received a degree in English and History from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a Ph.D. in Linguistics from McGill University. She taught at Yale, Cornell, and Stanford universities, and has been teaching in lifelong education programs since 2010. Her expertise is in language, culture, and history, and the relationship between them. Asya has published five scholarly books with Cambridge University Press. Asya is a popular instructor for several Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes around the country and was the faculty host for the OLLI trip to the Baltic countries and St. Petersburg in July 2017. **Page 9, 16, 22, 28.**



Anne Peterson is a native of Owatonna. She majored in history, and genealogy has long been a personal passion. After a 30-year career with Federated Insurance, she began working part-time at the Minnesota State Public School Orphanage Museum. In 2013, when the director position became available, she stepped into the role and has served in that capacity ever since. She is honored to work with such a meaningful organization, sharing the stories of the 10,635 children who spent part of their childhoods at the State School. **Page 19.**



Lauren Radick is a passionate educator and lifelong learner with a deep love for literature. A former early childhood center administrator, she now teaches the course "The Life and Times of Literary Favorites" and serves as an adjunct literature instructor for OLLI at Florida International University. Lauren holds a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and Literature from Emerson College and a Master's Degree in Education from The George Washington University. When she's not teaching, you can find her immersed in a good book, always seeking to expand her knowledge and share her passion for learning with others. **Page 12, 19, 24.**



Captain Ben Rich is an Aviation Enrichment Speaker with a broad and diverse aviation background, including positions as an Airline Captain, Aircraft Accident Investigator, and Air Traffic Control Specialist. Captain Rich's experience includes 39 years and over 15,000 hours of active flying concurrent with 25 years of Aircraft Accident Investigation in addition to 10 years of Air Traffic Control Operations experience. He commanded large Air Force Cargo and Aero Medical Evacuation aircraft as well as several commercial airliners including B-777 Jumbo Jets flying to six continents. He participated in seven National Transportation Safety Board accident investigations and numerous U.S. Air Force investigations. He was a fully qualified Air Traffic Control specialist in three Control Towers and one Terminal Radar Approach Control. Captain Rich has published numerous aviation articles and still consults part-time as an Airline Operations Subject Matter Expert. **Page 18, 25.**



Dr. Richard Ricketts graduated from Duke University with a doctorate in Geology in 1997, building a strong foundation in earth sciences and aquatic research. Since 1998, he has served as Marine Superintendent of the RV Blue Heron and as a Research Associate with the Large Lakes Observatory at the University of Minnesota Duluth. In his role aboard the RV Blue Heron, Richard oversees the operation and management of one of the premier freshwater research vessels on the Great Lakes, supporting a wide range of scientific investigations and educational initiatives. With decades of experience in marine operations and geological research, he has played an important role in advancing the understanding of large lake ecosystems while helping facilitate cutting-edge research for scientists, students, and collaborators from across the region and beyond. **Page 14.**



Dr. Sarah Ruble was born and reared in Washington State. She earned her Bachelor of Arts at Seattle Pacific University and her Master of Theological Studies and her Ph.D. in American religious history from Duke University. Since 2007, she has been a professor in the Department of Religion at Gustavus Adolphus College, primarily teaching courses in the history of American religion and Christian theology. She is the author of *The Gospel of Freedom and Power: Protestant Missionaries in American Culture after World War II*. Her most recent work includes two YouTube-based adult Sunday School curricula: one on the history of Christianity and racism in the United States and the other on the development of Christian doctrine, both available at sarahruble.com. She is a frequent teacher and guest preacher in Minnesota churches and lifelong learning programs. She lives in St. Peter, Minnesota with her husband and son. **Page 19, 29.**



Jeff Sauve is an award-winning author, historian, and seasoned public speaker known for his lively presentations and meticulously researched storytelling. After serving twenty years as an archivist at St. Olaf College, he transitioned into a full-time writing career specializing in true-crime narratives and regional history. In addition to several books he has authored, including *Murder at Minnesota Point*, Sauve's work appears in magazines and newspapers, historical association publications, and museum outreach channels, where he continues to collaborate with communities across the Upper Midwest to share compelling stories from the past. **Page 7, 16, 22.**



Tara Schmidt, M.Ed., RDN, LD is a registered dietitian and an instructor of nutrition at Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. As the lead dietitian for the Mayo Clinic Diet, she provides guidance rooted in evidence-based principles, helping individuals develop sustainable and realistic strategies for long-term health. She also hosts *Mayo Clinic On Nutrition*, a podcast that dives into current nutrition research and practical weight management tips. **Page 17.**



Hannah Selness and **Sophi Heim** believe financial planning is about more than money—it's about supporting the life you want to live. Together, they are committed to building meaningful relationships and helping clients pursue their goals with clarity and confidence. Outside of work, both love spending time with family and embracing the outdoors. For Hannah, that means hiking with her husband and three-year-old daughter. For Sophi, that means spending time on the family farm in St. Charles. **Page 21.**



Dr. Brendan Shea, Ph.D., is an Instructor of Philosophy and Computer Science at RCTC. He's published over 25 academic articles/book chapters, focused mainly on issues in applied ethics, the philosophy of science, or areas where these intersect (such as bioethics or the ethics of artificial intelligence). He's taught over 20 years and has given many LIFE lectures (which he enjoys!). He lives in Rochester, MN, with his wife, Annea, and son Harry. **Page 14.**



Jill Siegal Chalsty has devoted her life to the transformative power of education. As founder of Overcoming Obstacles, the nonprofit she launched in 1992, Jill pioneered life skills instruction that has now reached more than 180 million students worldwide. What began as a mission to help young people navigate life's challenges has evolved into a global movement for youth empowerment. Following the profound loss of her husband and her own battles with cancer, Jill embarked on a voyage of healing and reflection. That journey inspired her memoir, *Packets of Hope*, an exploration of resilience, love, and finding meaning through service. She's made her book available for free at packetsofhope.com. **Page 8.**



Dr. Heather Sklenicka has been an Instructor of Chemistry at RCTC since August 2023. She earned her Ph.D. in Synthetic Organic Chemistry from the U of M – Twin Cities after attending Drake University. Her favorite classes to teach are Organic Chemistry and Research. Outside of work, she keeps active by teaching group fitness classes at the Rochester Athletic Club, plays Dungeons & Dragons, and spends many happy hours on the couch with crochet, an audiobook, and a cat or two. **Page 20.**



Dr. Stephenie Slahor is retired from her law practice, and university and law school teaching. She now creates informative and enjoyable OLLI and adult education courses, primarily in the natural sciences, and about places where human history and/or geology have significance. **Page 10, 18, 25, 27.**

Betty Spitzmiller received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota. Betty is a retired college teacher of courses in writing, literature, classical mythology, and the humanities. **Page 5, 8.**



Katilynn Swanson is the Metro Organizer of Save the Boundary Waters where she engages with communities and volunteers to help them take action to protect the Wilderness. She previously served as an AmeriCorps at the University of Minnesota Extension's Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships, and she graduated in 2022 from Luther College with a degree in Sociology and Environmental Studies. **Page 13.**



Russ Swanson grew up on his family's 1870 homestead along the banks of the Big Sioux River just north of Canton, SD. At a young age, he developed a love for history while listening to family and neighbors tell stories about the early days of Dakota Territory. Russ continues the tradition of farming at his great-great-grandfather's homestead. He carries a passion for teaching and is currently in his 28th year as a high school FFA Advisor and Ag Education/Engineering teacher. In April, Russ released his first book *A Chase To The Death* which details the escape of the James-Younger Gang as they fled from a failed bank attempt at Northfield, MN on September 7, 1876. **Page 16.**



Stephen Troutman is a LIFE board member, facilitator, presenter, and life-long learner. He worked at IBM for 33 years; he retired as an Executive Consultant. Steve served in the Navy for 23 years and retired as a Captain. In retirement, for 12 years now, he has been a community volunteer; he is currently active at LIFE and SCORE (mentors to small businesses). In 2021, he received the Mayor's Medal of Honor for Senior Service. **Page 6, 11, 13.**



Nancy Vaillancourt, with a B.S. in Psychology and Social Work, spent more than 30 years serving the community through public libraries. A passionate local historian and author, Nancy published an article in *Minnesota History Magazine* and has written several works highlighting regional history, including Free to All: History of Owatonna Public Library and Homes of Note in Owatonna, Minnesota. She also co-authored *Steele County: Crossroads of Southern Minnesota*. In addition to writing, Nancy teaches community education classes, leads walking tours focused on local history, and facilitates genealogy groups for the Steele County Historical Society. Now retired, Nancy continues to share her lifelong passion for history, genealogy, education, and community engagement. **Page 23.**



Valerie Wassmer is the Executive Director and Education Director of the History Center of Olmsted County in Rochester. Previously, she spent 25 years teaching social studies at John Marshall High School, where she taught U.S. History, English Language Learners (ELL), and Advanced Placement courses. She also has extensive international teaching experience, having spent multiple summers in Tanzania, East Africa, leading teacher-training seminars and collaborating with educators from around the world. Valerie holds both a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science from St. Cloud State University. She is passionate about making history engaging, relevant, and accessible, and enjoys sharing stories that connect people with the rich history of southeastern Minnesota and beyond. **Page 26.**



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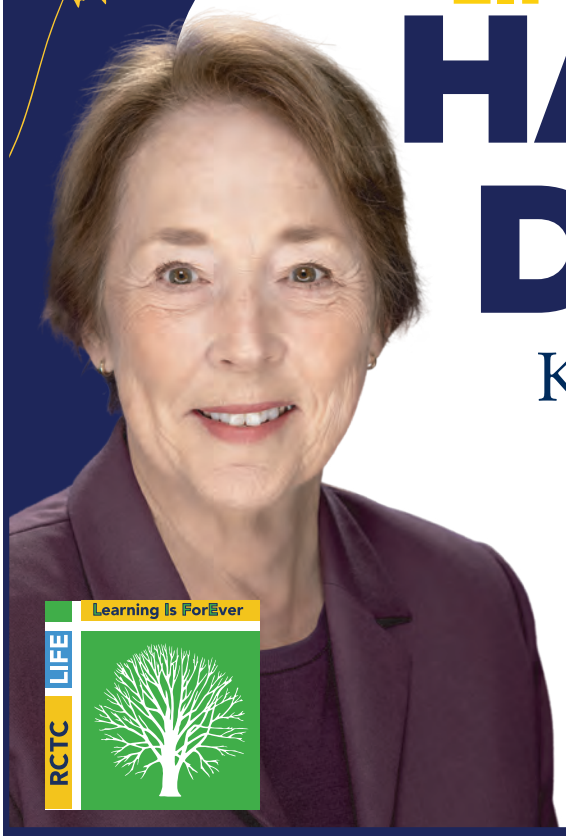
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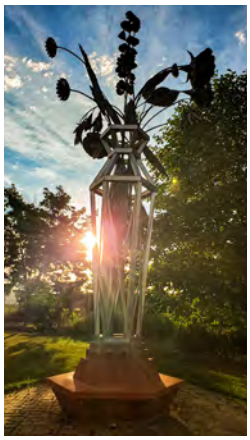
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