

Osher Online™

in collaboration with Northwestern University
School of Professional Studies

Fall 2026

September 28 - November 13, 2026

Learn with fellow OLLI members from around the country in courses taught by study area experts and hosted by Osher NRC staff.

- 24 courses, including 8 offered at or after 5:00 PM EST.
- Each course includes six 90-minute sessions.
- Offered live on Zoom only (not recorded.)
- Each course is \$55.00.
- Current OLLI membership is required.
- Managed by Osher NRC.*

Registration open

Aug 24 - Sept 13

Seats are limited so enroll early to reserve yours.

Register online at

<https://wvusph-olli.augusoft.net/>

*The Osher NRC manages Osher Online. They will communicate with participants directly. Participants will receive an email from osheronline@northwestern.edu containing your Osher Online username and password and a link to the Osher Online website, through which you will access your classes.

Osher Online Member Orientation will be held on Tuesday, September 22, at 2:00 p.m. EST.

**DISCOVER.
CONNECT.
THRIVE.**

Osher Online was created by the Osher National Resource Center (NRC) at Northwestern University to expand member access, institute collaboration, sharing of resources, and to ensure the legacy of the Osher Institutes.

Apple at 50: How it Revolutionized Computing and Transformed Daily Life

Tuesdays, September 29 through November 3, 7:00 - 8:30 PM EST

This course traces Apple's fifty-year history and its massive impact on personal computing, design, product culture, platforms and ecosystems, and daily life. Each session focuses on a different decade in Apple's history, from the birth of the PC in the late 1970s to the latest Apple silicon, VR headsets, and future iPhones. We will learn how Apple reshaped not just technology, but how people live, work, and communicate.

Your Instructor: Leander Kahney

Leander Kahney is a veteran technology reporter who has covered Apple for more than 30 years. He has written six books about the company, including two New York Times bestsellers. He is the editor and publisher of Cult of Mac, a long-running Apple blog, and was previously news editor at Wired.com.

Art Detectives: Forgery, Provenance, and the Science of Authentication

Mondays, September 28 through November 2, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

The art world may appear glamorous, but deception often lies beneath the surface. After weapons and drugs, art is the third most lucrative illicit trade, with reports suggesting that more than half of artworks are fake or misattributed. In this course, we will ask: When is a copy simply a copy, and when is it a forgery? What techniques do master forgers use? What can science tell us about art authenticity? We will uncover riveting stories of criminal art activity and master forgeries.

Your Instructor: Christine Maasdam

Christine Maasdam holds a master's in humanities and a bachelor's in cultural geography. Maasdam studied art at The Courtauld Institute, the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center, and the University of Glasgow. She trained in art crime investigation and is a member of the International Foundation for Cultural Property Protection. She holds Sotheby's certifications in art law and appraisal, serves as a museum education docent, and has volunteered on archaeological projects in Israel.

August Wilson and His American Cycle-The First Five: 1904-1957

Wednesdays, October 7 through November 11, 5:00 - 6:30 PM EST

August Wilson was the first African American playwright to have a Broadway theater bear his name, honoring his powerful portrayal of African American culture. In this course, we will read, watch, and examine plays from Wilson's American Cycle, which represents each decade of the 20th century. We will explore his life and influences while focusing on *Gem of the Ocean*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *Seven Guitars*, tracing his interpretation and celebration of African American culture.

Your Instructor: Ladrica Menson-Furr

Ladrica Menson-Furr, PhD, is assistant dean of undergraduate programs and associate professor of African American literature. Menson-Furr is the author of *August Wilson's Fences* and *August Wilson's Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, and has published on Zora Neale Hurston and Pearl Cleage. She has led academic programs in African American studies and served as a Provost's Fellow and a Tennessee Board of Regents' Maxine Smith Fellow.

Biology & Society

Thursdays, October 1 through November 5, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

This course introduces the scientific study of life, emphasizing real-world applications and the societal, ethical, and legal consequences of biological advances. We will place key principles within the context of issues that affect society. Designed for non-scientists with little or no recent science experience, the course encourages discussion and reflection. Many topics are at the leading edge of discovery, and we will consider the ongoing ethical and legal debates surrounding their application.

Your Instructor: Eric Simon

Eric Simon, PhD, is a professor of biology at New England College and holds a PhD in biochemistry from Harvard University. An avid traveler and award-winning nature photographer, he leads educational trips to destinations such as Belize, the Galapagos, Tanzania, Cuba, the Amazon River, and Patagonia. Simon is also the author of a best-selling series of college biology textbooks—used in over 40 countries—with more than 2 million copies in print.

The Birth of the Beat Generation

Tuesdays, September 29 through November 3, 9:00 - 10:30 PM EST

In this course, we will examine the dramatic circumstances that gave rise to the Beat Generation in the 1940s. Together, we will examine three famous Beat works: *Howl and Other Poems* by Allen Ginsberg, *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac, and *Naked Lunch* by William S. Burroughs. We will focus on historical events involving Beat writers, important passages of Beat literature, and the literary movement that spawned the 1960s counterculture.

Your Instructor: Kurt Hemmer

Kurt Hemmer is the editor of the Encyclopedia of Beat Literature and a professor at Harper College. Hemmer has produced award-winning documentaries on Beat poets with filmmaker Tom Knoff and published extensively on Beat writers. He organized the Jack Kerouac Centenary Conference and serves as president of the Beat Studies Association. He is currently working on a biography of Beat poet Gregory Corso.

The British Family in Film: Heavy is the Head That Wears the Crown

Mondays, September 28 through November 2, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

This course examines royal succession through acclaimed British films that explore power as a moral and political crisis. We will trace the monarchy's evolution from personal rule to institutional authority. We will cover the Plantagenet struggles in Becket and *The Lion in Winter*; the moral costs of kingship and the performance of national leadership through *Chimes at Midnight* and *Henry V*; the Tudor rupture through *A Man for All Seasons*; and the consolidation of legitimacy in Elizabeth.

Your Instructor: Butch Epps

Bernard (Butch) Epps earned his undergraduate degree from Loyola Marymount University, graduating cum laude as an award-winning film production major. He received his MFA from the UCLA School of Film and Television's graduate Producers Program, where he specialized in story development and working with screenwriters. At UCLA, he served as academic liaison to the MFA Producers Program faculty, including studio heads, development executives, and industry professionals. Epps has taught film appreciation courses with a strong emphasis on story analysis.

A Cosmic Grand Tour: The Realms of the Universe

Tuesdays, September 29 through November 3, 5:00 - 6:30 PM EST

In this course, we will explore the three fascinating realms of the cosmos: nearby planets and moons; the stars; and the galaxies (the great island of stars that turn out to be the building blocks of the universe.) Our discussion will be in everyday language, without any math, and will be accompanied by remarkable color images from the latest space probes and the world's largest telescopes, including the latest breathtaking images from the James Webb Space Telescope.

Your Instructor: Andrew Fraknoi

Andrew Fraknoi, retired chair of the astronomy department at Foothill College, continues to teach noncredit astronomy courses at San Francisco State University and the University of San Francisco. He is lead author of OpenStax Astronomy, the most frequently-used, introductory astronomy textbook in North America. He appears regularly on radio, explaining astronomical developments in everyday language, and was named California Professor of the Year. He writes science fiction, has published eight stories, and has an asteroid named in his honor, recognizing his contributions to the public understanding of science.

Cults and New Religious Movements in America

Tuesdays, October 6 through November 10, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

America has long been fertile ground for new and alternative religions. In this course, we will examine New Religious Movements, often labeled “cults”, within the US context. We will explore why some became accepted, others faded, and some led to controversy or tragedy. We will consider both insider perspectives and outsider views while analyzing their history, beliefs, and practices. Focusing on the 18th and 19th centuries, we will work to better understand these movements and challenge common misconceptions.

Your Instructor: Kathryn (Kate) Davis

Kate Davis, PhD, is an intersectional scholar and oral historian. Her work crosses between the fields of Religious Studies, Digital Humanities, and Gender Studies with a focus on North American religions. She holds a PhD in Religious Studies from Claremont Graduate University and is currently a visiting professor in Humanities and Theology at Alvernia University in Pennsylvania. Her first book, an ethnographic study of Mormon and Evangelical influencers, will be published next year.

Early 20th Century Avant-Garde: From Rebellion to Abstraction

Thursday, October 8 through November 12, 5:00 - 6:30 PM EST

Journey into the vibrant world of early 20th century art and witness the birth of abstraction. This transformative period reshaped the cultural landscape, from the bold colors of Fauvism, the fractured forms of Cubism, to the dreamlike realms of Surrealism. Each session focuses on the movements' leading artists including Matisse, Kandinsky, Picasso, Mondrian, Duchamp, and Dali. We will explore their aesthetic goals and the social and cultural currents that influenced them.

Your Instructor: Lauren Weingarden

Lauren Weingarden is professor emerita of art history at Florida State University. Her research explores the intersections of literature and visual art in 19th-century culture, with a focus on the American architect Louis Sullivan and French figures such as Charles Baudelaire and Édouard Manet. She has published extensively on these subjects and developed an interdisciplinary, embodied aesthetic model that invites viewers to re-experience artists' responses to modernity's fragmentation and the fleeting qualities of nature, a perspective that shapes her teaching on Impressionism.

Great Artists in American Roots Music

Mondays, September 28 through November 2, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

From its emergence in the early 20th century, country music has resonated with those navigating a rapidly changing world. A key genre of American roots music, it expresses hardship while evoking emotion. This course explores the history of country and American roots music through the stories and artistic developments of key figures including the Carter Family, Bill Monroe, Hank Williams, and Dolly Parton.

Your Instructor: Taylor Ackley

Taylor Ackley, PhD, is a scholar, composer, and performer of American Roots music. He holds a PhD and a master's degree in composition, and a master's in ethnomusicology from Stony Brook University. Ackley is an independent scholar and professional musician based in northwestern Montana and is writing his first book, *Hearing Class*. A singer and multi-instrumentalist, he has performed nationwide, released four albums, and presented at major conferences in music, sociology, and ethnomusicology.

The History and Experience of Route 66

Mondays, October 5 through November 9, 7:00 - 8:30 PM EST

Route 66 is as much an idea as it is a place. Since 1926, it has evolved from a busy highway into a symbol of nostalgia, travel, and the American road. Today, it serves as a kind of pilgrimage route, marked by neon signs and preserved roadside landmarks. In this course, we will explore its history, cultural meaning, rise and decline, revival, and preservation, while considering the future of this iconic American highway.

Your Instructor: Peter Dedek

Peter B. Dedek, PhD, is a professor of American history at Texas State University whose work explores the cultural history of the built environment and the stories embedded in historic places. Dedek brings together cultural, design, and social history to illuminate how people shape, and are shaped by the spaces they inhabit. He is the author of *Hip to the Trip: Route 66 Centennial Edition* and *The Cemeteries of New Orleans: A Cultural History*, and wrote *Historic Preservation for Designers*, a guide integrating preservation with design.

The Invisible Thread: 3,500 Years of Global Supply Chain

Mondays, October 19 through November 23, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

We often only notice the global supply chain when it breaks. Yet, for millennia, the movement of goods has been the silent engine of civilization. In this course, we will track the evolution of trade from an executive's perspective. From the sunken treasures of Bronze Age merchant ships to the high-tech intermodal systems of today, we will explore the vessels that carried the world's wealth and the complex networks that keep our modern shelves stocked.

Your Instructor: Scott Jones

Scott Jones brings a unique perspective to his lectures, combining 30 years of naval command, diplomatic service, and executive leadership in defense and maritime industries. Jones is a docent at the J. Paul Getty Museum, leading architecture and gallery tours. A retired Navy captain, he commanded three warships and a squadron, with assignments at the Pentagon and State Department. He later served as a senior executive for a defense corporation, a maritime shipping company, and ran his own consulting business.

Living off The Laughter: History of Comedy in America

Wednesdays, October 14 through November 18, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

This course is a history class with a laugh track. We will analyze the 20th and 21st centuries against their historic context, using humor as the platform. We will discuss how comedy was shaped by and responsive to American society, and how comedians influenced and shaped American life. We will cover Silent Films, Vaudeville, Radio, Screwball and Romantic Comedies, and the Golden Age of Television. We will study how each generation's identity influenced what (and whom) they laughed at.

Your Instructor: Eddy Friedfeld

Eddy Friedfeld is a film and entertainment journalist and historian. Friedfeld co-authored *Caesar's Hours* with Sid Caesar, Directed by James Burrows with James Burrows, and worked with Mel Brooks on *All About Me*. He was senior consultant for the Emmy-nominated *Make 'Em Laugh* and a consulting producer on *Funny You Never Knew*. He has produced tributes to major entertainers including George Carlin, Paul Newman, Dick Van Dyke, among others. He teaches at Yale, NYU, and the Tisch School of the Arts.

The Magic Behind Film Scores: The Role of Music in Great Movies-Part II

Wednesdays, September 30 through November 11, 5:00 - 6:30 PM EST

This course continues our journey into how music drives the emotional power of film. We will explore how scores and songs shape story, character, and memorable moments. We will focus on films where songs take center stage, from iconic themes to pop- and rock-driven storytelling. Spanning genres and eras, we will see how composers, songwriters, and performers expanded the language of film music – from Westerns and global cinema to the pop-cultural impact of James Bond and the Beatles.

Your Instructor: Mike Agron

Born in Los Angeles's entertainment scene, Mike Agron is a former high-tech executive and entrepreneur who now creates and delivers dynamic, story-driven seminars on music and entertainment. With a storyteller's eye and a DJ's ear, he has led 15 acclaimed seminar series, each spotlighting a different facet of music and entertainment.

Mexico City: Empires, Revolutions, and Everyday Life

Tuesdays, September 29 through November 3, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

Mexicans celebrate a remarkable diversity of peoples, music, food, festivals, and historical traditions, expressed through fiestas that bring communities together throughout the year. In this course, we will explore Mexico City as a cultural and historical crossroads shaped by centuries of continuity and change. We will trace the legacies of Indigenous civilizations, the transformations of Spanish colonial rule, the struggles for independence and revolution, and the rise of modern democratic politics, culminating in the election of Mexico's first woman president.

Your Instructor: William (Bill) Beezley

William Beezley is professor emeritus of history at the University of Arizona and a leading scholar of Mexican history and culture. Beezley received Mexico's Ohtli Medal for promoting Mexican culture abroad. He has taught at several universities, held endowed chairs, served as a Fulbright Specialist, and been a visiting professor in Mexico. He directed the Oaxaca Graduate Institute and has appeared on PBS. His current research explores embroidery as a voice of Mexican women.

Post-War Architecture: The Innovative Architects of the Midcentury Modern Period

Wednesdays, October 7 through November 11, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

From new industrial materials to innovations in housing, mid-20th-century designers worked to shape an aesthetic that reflected post-World War II ideals. In this course, we will explore the optimism linking design and lifestyle, especially through open living spaces. We will examine the Case Study Program and the work of designers such as Charles and Ray Eames, John Lautner, Eero Saarinen, E. Fay Jones, and Donald Wexler, within the context of rapid social change.

Your Instructor: Eleanor Schrader

Eleanor Schrader is an award-winning educator, lecturer, and author. She lectures and leads tours worldwide on art and architectural history. She was named a distinguished instructor at UCLA Extension, where she teaches history of architecture, interior design, furniture, and decorative arts. She completed graduate work in fine and decorative arts at Sotheby's Institute in London and New York. She served as a design review commissioner for the City of Beverly Hills and serves on the John Lautner Foundation board of directors.

Power and the People: The Evolution of the U.S. Federal Judiciary

Thursdays, October 15 through November 19, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

The American Experiment began with the Declaration of Independence and led to the creation of the federal judiciary, one of the country's greatest experiments. In this course, we will trace the evolution of the courts from their English roots to their formal establishment in the Constitution. We will explore how the Supreme Court, lacking the power of the purse or military, derives its authority from its ability to connect with the people of the US and protect democracy. We will examine creation of the federal judiciary and the power of the Marshall Court, the Court's evolution through the New Deal, the Vinson Court, the Warren Court's "Rights Revolution," and the role of today's US Supreme Court.

Your Instructor: Lauren Andersen

Lauren Andersen is the director of the Utah Judicial Institute. Andersen practiced appellate law in the state of California and presented arguments to the California Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court. During this time, Andersen closely studied the Roberts Court. She has lectured about the Supreme Court and the death penalty. Her opinions were quoted by *The New York Times* and the *ABA Journal*. She was previously the director of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Utah.

Sacred Mountains of the World

Mondays, October 5 through November 9, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

Across cultures and throughout history, mountains have held powerful symbolic meaning. In this course, we will explore how the Buddhists of the Himalayas, the Inca of the Andes, the Inuit of the far north, and European Romantics understood and approached these landscapes. Through an interdisciplinary lens, we will examine the beliefs, traditions, and mythologies inspired by the world's mountains, using illustrated lectures, short readings, and discussion to deepen our connection to these high and wild places.

Your Instructor: Jonathan Duncan

Jonathan Duncan is a photojournalist, writer, teacher, and public speaker with more than 25 years of experience. His work has been published in National Geographic, The Himalayan Journal, Sailing, Rock and Ice, and by the University of Utah Press. He has taught at the Art Institute of Portland, Western Washington University, and Westminster University. His work explores humanity's complex relationship with the natural world, often in remote landscapes and cultures.

The Search for an American Sound

Mondays, October 12 through November 16, 5:00 - 6:30 PM EST

Since the 1890s, when Americans were beginning to develop their own traditions in classical music, composers have recognized the dilemma of creating the American sound. We will explore how classical musicians, and Broadway and Hollywood composers, most of them Jewish, followed parallel paths in creating sounds that reflect these lands and its people. Aaron Copland, George Gershwin, William Grant Still, Florence Price, Alex North, Elmer Bernstein and others will be the protagonists of this lecture.

Your Instructor: Emanuel Abramovits

Emanuel Abramovits is a mechanical engineer and has been a concert promoter for over two decades. He is involved in events by international artists like Itzhak Perlman, Gustavo Dudamel, Sarah Brightman, Roger Hodgson, ASIA, Journey, and Kenny G. Abramovits has designed and staged original orchestral events, including an Event of the Year winner and several world premieres. He served as the cultural director at Union Israelita De Caracas, releasing books and organizing film cycles, concerts, and art exhibits.

The 60s Through the Great Speeches

Fridays, October 9 through November 13, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

The 1960s is a decade wrapped in myth and misunderstanding. In this course, we will cut through that haze by turning to something powerful and concrete: the speeches of the era. The times and the conditions demanded these significant speeches. Together, we will listen to the voices that moved a nation and shaped history. With recordings preserved through television, video, and YouTube, we will discover what these speeches still have to teach us today.

Your Instructor: Arthur (Buck) Benedict

Buck Benedict is a former lecturer at Wharton and the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania, where he taught public speaking for 16 years. He also created and taught speechwriting classes. He was awarded the first Excellence in Teaching Award at the Fels Institute and was nominated for the university-wide Provost Award for non-standing faculty.

Some Assembly Required: The Story of the North American Kit Home

Wednesdays, September 30 through November 4, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

In this course, we will explore the history and cultural impact of kit homes in North America, focusing on their peak from 1905 to 1945. We will learn how to identify these mail-order houses and examine their rise, decline, and industrial innovations. We will also consider how kit homes intersected with issues of race and gender. Through examination of the industry and the stories of the people who lived in these homes, we will discover why they remain an important part of the cultural landscape.

Your Instructor: Nigel Tate

Nigel Tate is an urban planning student at Michigan State University and an architectural preservationist and historian. Tate has studied kit homes for more than a decade, delivered talks across mid-Michigan, and created a guide to kit homes in Grand Blanc, MI. His interest began with a childhood discovery and has grown into ongoing research and advocacy focused on identifying and documenting these distinctive homes.

“Studies Show...” (Or Do They?): Under the Hood of a Scientific Study

Thursdays, October 1 through November 5, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

What really changes when we read beyond the abstract? In this interactive course, we will open real research papers (many in health and nutrition) and explore what scientists actually look for. We will explore how small design choices can dramatically shape a study's meaning, and why headlines rarely tell the full story. No technical background is required – just curiosity. By the end of the course, we will never read “studies show...” the same way again.

Your Instructor: John Hendrickson

Johnnie Hendrickson, PhD, is a teaching professor in the School of Molecular Sciences at Arizona State University. He holds a PhD in chemistry and is the author of the textbook *Chemistry in the World*. His academic work centers on science communication and the reciprocal relationship between science and society.

Tracing Our Roots: DNA, Family History, and the Politics of Identity

Wednesdays, September 30 through November 4, 7:00 - 8:30 PM EST

How does DNA reshape our understanding of ancestry and identity in the Americas? In this course, we will explore genetic genealogy through early contact between European and Indigenous peoples, using the New Mexico DNA Project as a case study. We will examine Y-DNA, mitochondrial DNA, Indigenous haplogroups, and the Spanish castas system. We will consider the ethical and political implications of DNA testing and the limits of what genetic evidence can, and cannot, tell us about race and belonging.

Your Instructor: Angel Cervantes

Angelo Cervantes is an anthropological genetic genealogist and history researcher who has conducted archival work in Mexico and Spain. Cervantes teaches at the University of New Mexico and founded the Iberian Peninsula DNA Institute, offering DNA consulting and courses in anthropological genetics. He pioneered anthropological genetic genealogy through the creation of the New Mexico DNA Project, now a major Hispanic DNA database. He has appeared on PBS and frequently lectures on genetic genealogy in the US and Mexico.

Winning the White House: The Evolution of the Presidency

Tuesdays, September 29 through November 3, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

Harry S. Truman called the presidency “the most peculiar office in the world.” In this course, we will explore how the framers left the office open to interpretation, allowing presidential power to expand over time. We will examine how the presidency has come to dominate the three branches, how presidents gain and use power, and how the rise of the administrative state has altered the balance the framers intended.

Your Instructor: John White

John Kenneth White is a political scientist specializing in American political parties and the US presidency. White is the author of several books, including *The New Politics of Old Values*, *Still Seeing Red*, *Barack Obama's America*, *Grand Old Unraveling*, and *Democracy on the Edge*, co-authored with Matthew R. Kerbel. He taught at The Catholic University of America and writes a biweekly column for *The Hill*, a Washington, D.C. based publication covering the White House and Capitol Hill.