

Osher Online™

in collaboration with Northwestern University
School of Professional Studies

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

- 15 courses, including 3 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.

Registration open

May 4 - June 21

Seats are limited so enroll early to reserve yours.

Register online at
<https://wvusph-olli.augusoft.net/>

or by calling the OLLI at WVU office
at 304-293-1793.

DISCOVER. CONNECT. THRIVE.

Summer 2026

July 6 - August 28, 2026

Broadway Musicals: A Fascinating History
Canals and the Making of the Modern World
Children's Literature: The Development of a Genre
Deaf Culture and History
The Digital Shift: How Computing Remade Media
Discovering Portugal
Endless Grounds: Coffee's Social, Economic, and Cultural Life
Hindu Traditions: Ritual, Knowledge, Devotion
History of Signs: How Signs Tell America's Story
Horticulture A-Z
The Indispensable Founder: George Washington
Protecting Yourself as a Patient
Revolutionary Echoes in Washington DC
Threads of History: The World of Oriental Rugs
Women Architects and Designers

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.

Broadway Musicals: A Fascinating History (Lecture)

Tuesdays, July 21 through August 25, 5:00 – 6:30 PM EST

Musicals have been a major part of American theater, from the Tin Pan Alley-driven comedies of the early twentieth century to the integrated musicals that flourished in the heyday years of midcentury America. In this course, we will explore book musicals, concept musicals, and the arrival of European mega-productions late in the century. We will profile some of the theater world's leading composers, lyricists, writers, choreographers, directors, and performers. With the help of audiovisuals, we will study many of the most unforgettable shows including *Oklahoma!*, *My Fair Lady*, *Show Boat*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Hair*, *Cabaret*, *Rent*, *Wicked*, *Hamilton*, and more.

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.

Canals and the Making of the Modern World (Lecture)

Wednesdays, July 8 through August 12, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

When the Erie Canal opened in 1825, it revolutionized American travel and transportation, but its inspiration came from Europe's earlier canal networks. In this course, we will trace the development of French, British, and Irish canals in the 17th and 18th centuries. We will follow the story into the 19th century as we turn to American canals, especially in New York and Pennsylvania. Along the way, we will explore how canals reflect the politics and aspirations of different nations and why they still matter for global shipping today. Whether we are drawn to engineering marvels, the people who built them, or the pleasure of drifting along a canal or hiking a towpath, we will deepen our appreciation of canals' importance and beauty.

Your instructor: Bernie Carlson

Bernard (Bernie) Carlson is Vaughan Professor Emeritus of Humanities at the University of Virginia and an expert on invention, entrepreneurship, and technology's role in society. He received the Sally Hacker Prize from the Society for the History of Technology and the William Middleton Prize from the IEEE, and filmed *Understanding the Inventions that Changed the World*. Now based in Ireland, he directs the MS program in AgInnovation at the University of Galway, where he trains adult learners in product development, startups, and sustainable farming.

Children's Literature: The Development of a Genre (Lecture)

Tuesdays, July 7 through August 11, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

In this course, we will trace the evolution of literature specifically written for children - from its earliest forms to the modern era. We will begin with the oral traditions that underpin all storytelling, then follow the shift toward published works created specifically with young readers in mind. We will survey key moments and turning points that shaped the growth of children's literature as a distinct field. We will conclude by analyzing how a well-known children's literature has evolved over time.

Your instructor: Blake Regnier

Blake Regnier is a former middle school reading interventionist and current English instructor for Worthington Learning Center. Regnier is also an adjunct instructor of English for Minnesota West Community and Technical College. With a diverse background in literary traditions spanning classical works through the modern era, his primary research interest has been in Victorian era monsters and other assorted "things that go bump in the night."

Deaf Culture and History (Lecture)

Thursdays, July 9 through August 13, 5:00 - 6:30 PM EST

This course introduces key aspects of Deaf Culture in the United States and the factors that define the Deaf community as a cultural minority. We will focus on awareness, cultural diversity, and the preservation of language. This course addresses the cultural identity, group norms, rules of social interaction, values, and traditions held by deaf members. Together we will explore the impact of modern technology, emerging issues, trends, and advocacy with the Deaf community. We will also address topics related to communication, terminology, educational alternatives, state and federal legislation, and community resources.

Your instructor: Matthew Cooper

Matthew Cooper is an Assistant Professor of American Sign Language at the University of Tulsa and adjunct faculty at Tulsa Community College. Born to two Deaf parents, Cooper grew

up a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) in a family who were leaders and active participants in the Deaf community. In 2025, Cooper was a TEDx Editor's Pick for his TEDx Talk titled *Between Two Worlds: A CODA's Perspective*. He is currently writing a book about the modern CODA experience.

Discovering Portugal (Lecture)

Tuesdays, July 7 through August 11 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

In this course, we will explore how a tiny nation – Portugal – played an outsized role in world history. We will examine Portugal's fifteenth and sixteenth century maritime expansion (once called the "Discoveries"), as well as its central role in the transatlantic trade in enslaved people. We will trace how Portugal, once a fringe region of the Roman Empire, emerged as the only independent kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula as Castile grew into Spain. We will follow Portugal's rise as a global power, with outposts stretching from Brazil to Japan, and then its decline as rival empires overtook it – culminating in twentieth century poverty under Europe's longest dictatorship. Finally, we will consider how this past continues to shape Portuguese identity and culture in the decades since a revolution ushered in democracy. As we survey Portugal's landscapes, art and architecture, and food, we will see why record numbers of Americans are now visiting the country.

Your instructor: Alison Roberts

Alison Roberts is a journalist with nearly four decades of experience, reporting in her native UK and later internationally for English-language outlets including the BBC, NPR, and Bloomberg News. Her work has covered politics, finance, sports, and the arts. She has edited or contributed to a dozen guidebooks and provided online updates for Fodor's, Time Out, and other publishers. Now based in Portugal, she is writing a history of the country and has explored it extensively from north to south.

Endless Grounds: Coffee's Social, Economic, and Cultural Life (Lecture)

Thursdays, July 9 through August 13, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

Coffee will provide a lively lens on major past and present issues, including climate change, social life, health, global North–South differences, social and economic justice, tourism, and slavery. We will begin "from the ground up," tracing coffee from planting and processing through shipping and, ultimately, the beverage in our cups - part of nearly two billion cups consumed daily worldwide. We will explore coffee's global history and its shift from an elite drink to an everyday staple. Drawing on current research, we will examine coffee and health, as well as practical questions such as how more income might reach farmers and how coffee production might adapt to a changing climate. The instructor will share firsthand experiences from coffee farms around the world, discuss a range of brewing methods, and demonstrate how coffee is brewed. Sessions will be interactive, with time for questions throughout.

Your instructor: Robert Thurston, PhD

Robert Thurston, PhD, is Emeritus Professor of History at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio). He earned a BA in History from Northwestern University and a PhD in modern Russian history from the University of Michigan. His writing spans twentieth-century Russian/Soviet history, witch hunts (Europe and Salem), the body in the Anglosphere (1880–1920), and coffee as an economic and social force. A devoted coffee educator, he has opened a roastery and coffee shop and has visited coffee farms from Asia to South America.

Hindu Traditions: Ritual, Knowledge, Devotion (Lecture)

Wednesdays, July 15 through August 19, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

In this course, we will gain a comprehensive introduction to Hindu traditions, emphasizing the importance of ritual, knowledge, and devotion across Hindu traditions from classical to contemporary times. We will introduce Hinduism's South Asian roots, that can be traced to the Vedic tradition, which provides key conceptual and religious foundations. We will consider early and classical expressions of Hindu thought and religious life through the complex term dharma. Major Hindu deities are then introduced alongside associated narratives, practices, and iconography. We will examine the six major schools of Hindu philosophy using both secondary and primary sources. We will then consider bhakti (devotion) that has characterized diverse Hindu traditions across centuries. Finally, we will consider sacred space and places including temples and tīrthas, as well as the interrelationship of the concept of divine presence and pilgrimage practices that relate to these holy sites.

Your instructor: Eileen Goddard

Eileen Goddard is a Religious Studies PhD candidate at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Goddard lectures on Indian and Asian religious traditions at both UCSB and the University of Houston. Her research centers on the interrelationship of soteriology and embodiment in the sixteenth-century Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava Kṛṣṇa tradition. She is a comparative scholar whose research also includes the Pātañjala Yoga, Advaita Vedānta, Śrīvaiṣṇava, and Pāñcarātra traditions, analyzing how emotion, desire, meditation, and ritual variously contribute towards ultimate realization of self and/or divine Other.

History of Signs: How Signs Tell America's Story (Lecture)

Fridays, July 24 through August 28, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

Explore 100 years of American history through objects often taken for granted in everyday life: signs. Led by the American Sign Museum (ASM) staff, this course introduces the Museum's origins and features a conversation with ASM's founder about why signs matter. We will examine how signs have evolved due to trends in commerce and technology. We will also explore case studies of three major

food companies who used signage to shape their brands. In the final session, we will take a virtual visit to ASM's neon shop to see how a neon sign is made.

Your instructor: Erin Holland

The American Sign Museum (Cincinnati, Ohio) covers more than 100 years of American sign history and displays more than 800 signs and artifacts, making it the most comprehensive museum of its kind. With a mission to educate the community about the history of the sign industry and its significant contribution to commerce and the American landscape, the Museum is organized to preserve, archive and display a historical collection of signs in their many types and forms.

Horticulture A-Z (Lecture)

Tuesdays, July 7 through August 11, 7:00 - 8:30 PM EST

In this course, we will explore a wide range of horticultural practices with something to offer no matter our experience level or where we live. We will cover container gardening, aquatic gardens, ornamental and fruiting plants, bonsai, landscape design, and pest management. Each week, we will focus on a theme and examine design ideas, plant choices, and long-term care practices for success. Whether we garden on 10 acres or in an apartment, we will find plenty to learn and enjoy in horticulture.

Your instructor: Chris Baker

Chris Baker has worked in horticulture for 15 years, including as a horticulturist at the National Aquarium in Baltimore and as Curator of Bonsai at the Chicago Botanic Garden. He focuses on the use and benefits of native plant species and sound, eco-friendly horticultural practices. Baker studied with bonsai master Torho Suzuki at the Daiju-en Nursery in Japan. He is President of the North American Bonsai Federation and a board member of the World Bonsai Friendship Federation.

Protecting Yourself as a Patient (Lecture)

Tuesdays, July 21 through August 25, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

This course will arm us with the knowledge we need to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe when engaging with the healthcare system. Health care today is more complex, technical, and volatile than ever. Medical harm (unintentional but often preventable) injures and kills hundreds of thousands of patients each year. In this course, we will learn how to prevent the most common types of medical harm including medication errors, patient care accidents, procedural and surgical complications, infections, and diagnostic mistakes. Patient safety experts and advocates will provide us with practical tips and insights to navigate the healthcare system confidently and safely. Through

presentations, videos, and group discussions, we will come to understand the common sources of error and discover tactics, resources, and cautions to help protect ourselves and our loved ones.

Your instructor: Hardeep Singh, MD

Hardeep Singh, MD, is a Professor of Medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and a leader in quality and safety research focused on reducing diagnostic errors, improving health information technology, and transforming health care systems. His work has informed major patient-safety initiatives and policy reports from organizations including the National Academy of Medicine, CDC, OECD, and WHO. He has received prestigious awards for his pioneering work, including the Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers and John M. Eisenberg Patient Safety and Quality Award for Individual Lifetime Achievement.

Revolutionary Echoes in Washington DC (Lecture)

Thursdays, July 9 through August 13, 1:00 - 2:30 PM

The Declaration of Independence is a pivotal American document, not just for eighteenth-century revolutionaries, but for people throughout US history. This course will explore how individuals in Washington, D.C. used the Declaration and its ideas after independence was won. From the capital city's planners to Union soldiers who defended Washington amid civil war, many evoked the Declaration to support their causes and shape a capital city. Spotlighting museum artifacts from the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection, this course will cover D.C.'s early history through 1876, the nation's first centennial celebration.

Your instructor: Kasey Sease

Kasey Sease, PhD, is Curator of the Albert H. Small Washingtoniana Collection at The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. Beyond developing exhibitions and activating the collection, she programs the Albert H. Small Center for National Capital Area Studies. A former Managing Editor of Washington History, Kasey holds degrees from the College of William and Mary (PhD, MA, history) and the University of Virginia (BA, history and government).

The Digital Shift: How Computing Remade Media (Lecture)

Mondays, July 20 through August 24, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM EST

The music we stream, the photos we swipe through, the real time news we consume, the books we read or listen to – all have been radically reshaped by digital technology. This course will explore how media is created, stored, and experienced in a digitized world. We will unpack fundamentals like text files, encoding and decoding, pixels, and algorithms in clear, easy-to-understand ways – no prior computer knowledge needed. Each session will focus on a different medium, comparing its

analog origins with its contemporary digital version. We will also consider the impact of Generative AI and speculate on future trends. Topics will include text (books, e-books, news portals), images (photography and movies), music, video games, social media, and media ownership (physical media, streaming, and copyrights).

Your instructor: Rafael Davis Portela

Rafael Davis Portela is a PhD candidate in Latin American History at the Graduate Center, CUNY. His research examines the history of computing and technology, especially how they shaped and were shaped by economy. His dissertation traces Microsoft's expansion in Brazil, the rise of the Brazilian computing industry, and resulting tensions between the US and Brazilian governments. Beyond history, Portela is passionate about programming and digital tools and has taught university researchers how to use computing in their own work.

The Indispensable Founder: George Washington (Lecture)

Mondays, July 13 through August 17, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

As America celebrates 250 years of independence, this course will examine the indispensable founder, George Washington. We will explore Washington's life and political leadership as well as his work as a farmer, entrepreneur, and architect. We will also review the groundbreaking work of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (MVLA) which has owned and managed George Washington's Mount Vernon since 1858. In that year, an intrepid group of women (who had no right to vote or own property) came together to save George Washington's home, after both the Federal Government and Commonwealth of Virginia had refused to help. MVLA formation marked the birth of the historic preservation movement.

Your instructor: Dede Petri

Anne "Dede" Neal Petri was elected the 24th Regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association (MVLA) in 2024. The MVLA, founded in 1858, is responsible for the management and preservation of George Washington's Mount Vernon. The MVLA mission is to educate the world about the leadership and character of George Washington in order to inspire future generations. Petri received her undergraduate degree in American history and literature from Harvard College and her law degree from Harvard Law School.

Threads of History: The World of Oriental Rugs (Lecture)

Mondays, July 6 through August 10, 3:00 - 4:30 PM EST

What makes an Oriental rug so captivating—its elegant design, intricate patterns, or the mystery of its origins? In this richly illustrated course, we will discover the stories woven into these remarkable textiles. We will travel through the history and artistry of rug and carpet weaving, a tradition rooted

in Asia and North Africa, with examples dating back to the 4th century BCE. Using stunning visuals and expert insights, we will explore major carpet-making cultures and regions including Anatolia, Iran, Transcaucasia, North Africa, and Central Asia. We will learn to recognize defining features of Oriental rugs: weaving traditions (nomadic and settled), key historical periods (from the Early Modern era through the nineteenth-century), purposes (from prayer to decoration), and production contexts (from royal courts to bustling markets). We will also be introduced to basic methods for identifying weave structures and deepen our appreciation of these remarkable works of art.

Your instructor: Sumru Krody

Sumru Belger Krody is Chief Curator and Avenir Foundation Curator of The Textile Museum Collection at The George Washington University Museum and The Textile Museum. A specialist in late antique and Islamic textiles, she leads the museum's curatorial department and serves as Editor-in-Chief of The Textile Museum Journal. Krody guest lectures at George Washington University and has curated numerous exhibitions, including *Enduring Traditions* and the upcoming *Adorning the Horse*. She has written widely and co-authored nine publications, including *Textile Treasures* (2025).

Women Architects and Designers (Lecture)

Wednesdays, July 15 through August 26, 1:00 - 2:30 PM EST

Often overlooked in traditional design and architecture courses, twentieth century women designers profoundly shaped the way we perceive, experience, and enjoy our built environments, interiors, and decorative objects. In this course, we will explore the work and influence of such designers and architects as Elsie de Wolfe, Eileen Gray, Lilly Reich, Charlotte Perriand, Dorothy Draper, Ray Eames, Zaha Hadid, and others. Their lives and the beauty of their enduring designs are documented within the context of the social and political issues they faced, as they left their unmistakable imprints upon twentieth century design.

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.