

## Late Fall 2021- 2022 OLLI Study Groups

### Monday:

#### *Famous Trials*

Trisha Crowley, Coordinator

Mondays, 9:30 - 11:00 am

8 sessions -11/8;11/15;11/29;12/6;12/13;12/20;1/10;1/24

Format: Zoom Meeting

This study group will discuss some of the most important trials throughout history. One facilitator each week will lead a discussion of one of these trials. The discussions will be based on the material at <https://famous-trials.com/>

**Reading Materials:** No reading is required but reading the information about the trial at the Famous-Trials website before the session will provide some background for the discussion.

#### **Facilitators:**

November 8 - Trisha Crowley- Burns (Fugitive Slave) Trial

November 15- Ed Roy - Black Sox Trial

November 29 -Mary Kuetemeyer & Dee Breeding- Osage Murder Trials

December 6 - Millie Davis- Celia, A Slave Trial

December 13- Joe Hooker - Scopes "Monkey" Trial

December 20 - Jerry Soesbe - Carthage (Joseph Smith Murder) Trial

January 10- Casey Sutherland - Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education

January 24 - Norm Klein - Leo Frank Trial

#### *Modern American Short Story Discussion Group*

Paula Watson

Mondays, 1:30 - 3:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/8;11/15;11/29;12/6;12/13;12/20;1/10;1/24

Format: in-person

We will explore the contemporary American short story as an art form and a source of reading pleasure using a brand-new anthology, *The Penguin Book of the Modern American Short Story*. The stories were originally published from the 1970's to the 2010's. A few have been widely anthologized, but most are less familiar, although no less provocative and engaging. Realism, flash fiction, fantasy, and science fiction are represented by established names like Raymond Carver, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Susan Sontag as well as by newer, more diverse voices such as Ted Chiang, Manuel Munoz, Ken Liu, and Julie Otsuka. We will read and discuss two or three stories each week.

**Reading Material:** *The Penguin Book of the Modern American Short Story*, edited by John Freeman (New York: Penguin Press, 2021; ISBN-13: 9781984877802)

Because of potential supply chain issues, participants are encouraged to purchase the book as soon as they register for the course. This book is also available on Kindle.

**Facilitator:** Paula Watson has led numerous OLLI short story discussion groups. She is the chair of the OLLI Study Group Committee. She holds a master's degree in English literature.

**Tuesday:**

**Modern American Short Story Discussion Group**

Paula Watson

Tuesdays, 10:00 - 11:30 am

8 sessions - 11/9;11/16;11/30;12/7;12/14;1/4;1/11;1/18

Format: Zoom Meeting

We will explore the contemporary American short story as an art form and a source of reading pleasure using a brand-new anthology, *The Penguin Book of the Modern American Short Story*. The stories were originally published from the 1970's to the 2010's. A few have been widely anthologized, but most are less familiar, although no less provocative and engaging. Realism, flash fiction, fantasy, and science fiction are represented by established names like Raymond Carver, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Susan Sontag as well as by newer, more diverse voices such as Ted Chiang, Manuel Munoz, Ken Liu, and Julie Otsuka. We will read and discuss two or three stories each week.

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**To Boldly Go Where We Have Not Gone Before—Caveat Emptor**

Norm Klein and Bob Straus

Tuesdays, 1:30 - 3:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/9;11/16;11/30;12/7;12/14;1/4;1/11;1/18

Format: Hybrid

In this discussion group we will read and discuss the book *Genesis: The Story of How Everything Began*, by Guido Tonelli. **Tonelli says this book is purposely written for a lay person.** Tonelli, a particle physicist, takes us to the intersection of physics, theology, and philosophy in this work. Drawing upon the latest discoveries in physics, Tonelli provides a theoretical account of the origins of the universe. This theory, presented as if it were a factual retelling of ancient history, touches upon some of the deepest, most penetrating questions we are capable of asking:

Why is there something rather than nothing? How did the universe begin? And how did it become what it is today? What is the nature of ultimate reality? What are the building blocks of the universe? What are the forces that act upon the building blocks of the universe? Can we derive meaning and purpose from existence?

We will attempt to make sense of the theory Tonelli advances but will do this while examining the underlying philosophical and theological issues that are entailed by Tonelli's theory of the creation of the universe. Bob's background in philosophy and Norm's studies in religious history and theology and world literature will lead us to attempt to raise questions and complications to an already complex cosmological perspective.

If you have questions about the particle physics and astronomy of it all, we will appeal to the experts among us (if there are any in attendance), as well as pass the questions on to an expert (a theoretical physicist) whom we have already begun to consult. However, caveat emptor - there will never be more truth to the following statement than as it applies to this class: "you will leave this class with more questions than answers."

**Reading Material:** *Genesis: The Story of How Everything Began* by Guido Tonelli (ISBN-13: 9780374600488)

**Facilitators:** Norman Klein is retired as the emeritus rabbi at Sinai Temple in Champaign, after serving as the interim rabbi at temples in Canada and Florida. Before becoming Rabbi Emeritus at Sinai Temple, Champaign, IL, he served as rabbi from 1995 to 2013.

Prior to his career in Human Resources management, Bob Strauss completed a bachelor's and master's degrees in philosophy. His areas of study included the history of philosophy.

### ***Eastern European Films***

Marganit Weinberger-Rotman

Tuesdays, 1:30 - 4:30 pm

8 sessions - 11/9;11/16;11/30;12/7;12/14;1/4;1/11;1/18

Format: in-person

In this study group we will view films from East European countries, all produced in the last decade. These films have garnered international awards and critical acclaim. Some deal with social and political aspects, such as venality and institutional corruption ("Graduation" -Rumania 2017, "Leviathan" - Russia 2014), others re-examine WW2 and its aftermath ("1945" - Hungary 2018, "The Interpreter" - Czech Republic, 2018, "Cold War" - Poland 2018, and "Beanpole" -Russia 2020). Two German films address questions of conscience, guilt, and rebellion against the regime in the DDR ("Never Look Away" - 2018, and "The Silent Revolution" - 2018). "Loveless"- Russia 2017 examines a dysfunctional modern Russian family and "Kolya" an earlier Czech movie (1998) described a surprising bond between a middle-aged musician and a foreign child on the cusp of the Velvet Revolution.

**Facilitator:** Marganit Weinberger-Rotman worked for Israeli Television for many years and attends the International Jerusalem Film Festival every year. She has facilitated nine OLLI study groups

involving Israeli cinema, French comedies, and German, Iranian, Middle Eastern films and most recently films on refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers.

### Wednesday:

#### *The New Yorker*

Kathleen Holden and Marilyn Resch

Wednesdays, 9:30 - 11:00 am

8 sessions - 11/10;11/17;12/1;12/8;12/15;1/5;1/12;1/19

Format: Zoom Meeting

*The New Yorker* provides a unique mix of articles and reviews on current topics, literature, and the arts. This study group is designed for readers of *The New Yorker* who want to get together to discuss current articles from the magazine. Members will be encouraged to choose and lead the discussion of one or more articles during this session. Participants are required to have some reliable means of obtaining the articles to be discussed.

**Reading Material:** *The New Yorker*

**Facilitators:** Kathleen Holden is a retired UIUC administrator. She has been a member of several interesting OLLI study groups, including the New Yorker.

Marilyn Resch is a retired attorney. Since joining OLLI in late 2013, she has participated in a number of study groups on a variety of topics. *The New Yorker* is one of her favorites.

#### *The Politics and Challenges of the Visual Arts in the US and Europe During and After WWII 1940-60*

Sharon Williams

Wednesdays, 1:00 - 2:30 pm

8 sessions - 11/10;11/17;12/1;12/8;12/15;1/5;1/12;1/19

Format: Zoom Webinar

How did it happen that after WWII many critics crowned New York the capital of avant-garde art? Paris had been the center of the “isms” of modernism for over eighty years. The United States artists had looked to Paris for leadership and inspiration, admitting that much of the art in the US lacked the sophistication and creativity of European art. The general American public and many US politicians were critical of abstract art and continued to support artists of the figurative “American Scene” painting. Had the New York School artists broken into such new territory that they were worthy of the leadership role? What made their work so attractive to the liberal cultural leadership of the US during the early years of the cold war? Could these liberals perhaps have played a role in The New York School being crowned?

In Europe, how was art used by Fascists as a propaganda weapon? How did Stalinism, Fascism, Nazism and the destruction of war affect the avant-garde artists of Europe? Was their work not as “avant-garde” as it had once been? How did they respond to the Americans invading their “turf”? In this Study Group we will look for the answers to these as well as other questions. First, we will review the New York School, later given the name Abstract Expressionists, and the political climate in the US during and after WWII. We will look at the situation of European avant-garde artists in the climate of Stalin, Mussolini, and Hitler and consider how it affected their art as well as the treasures of European art. We will view the art created by European artists during the war and after it and consider the impact of the war on what they created. Lastly, we will contemplate what impact the viewing of the US artists’ exhibitions and other US cultural imports had on the avant-garde European artists.

Each week Sharon will post a PDF of sample paintings, which will be the basis of that week’s presentation. Additional paintings, videos, and films, with comments from artists and art historians, will be used in the Power Point presentation to add to the understanding of each week’s artists and topics.

**Facilitator:** Sharon Williams is a graduate of Illinois Wesleyan University and a State of Illinois licensed Interior Designer who was co-owner of a furniture and design business for over 35 years. She has an interest in art and art history and hopes to share her knowledge and learn from other OLLI members. She presently serves on the OLLI Board and has participated in numerous study groups and courses. This is the twenty-first art study group she has facilitated.

### **The Economist**

Claire Barker and Doug Staske

Wednesdays, 1:30 – 3:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/10;11/17;12/1;12/8;12/15;1/5;1/12;1/19

Format: Zoom Meeting

The British *Economist* magazine supplies an outside viewpoint on the United States and a deep historical understanding of the rest of the world. It tackles economic and financial issues in detail but most often writes about the weekly issues in the news in impressive depth. All areas of the world are covered as are updates in science, justice, international relationships, climate change, race, cybersecurity, family etc.

We welcome new members wholeheartedly as everyone brings expertise and a viewpoint to the table that enriches the discussion.

**Reading Material:** All participants are expected to have access to *The Economist* in print or digitally. Digital access is available through the Champaign Public Library at no cost with a library card.

**Facilitators:** Claire Barker has co-hosted or hosted the meeting since 2019. For one year, she has participated in the monthly International Economist Readers Group (Britain, Canada, US) and has attended several *Economist* magazine presentations. She is a retired internist and geriatrician who

grew up in a financial family. She's learned a lot from *The Economist* magazine and the other members of the group.

Doug Staske is a retired civil engineer with an interest in hiking who is a long-time member of the group and has been co-hosting since summer 2021.

### *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*

Fred Christensen

Wednesdays, 3:00 - 4:30 pm

5 sessions - 11/10;11/17;12/1;12/8;12/15

Format: in-person

This group will read and discuss Yuval Harari's *21 Lessons for the 21st Century*. The author has applied his vivid, clear, thought-provoking, and provocative style to our past (*Sapiens*) and future (*Homo Deus*), and here examines the world's most important current issues. Each chapter is a self-contained essay, and we'll cover three or four in each session. From Liberty ("Big Data is watching you") to Nationalism ("Global problems and answers"), from Terrorism ("Don't panic") to Education ("Change is the only constant"), from Work ("Will there be jobs?") to Meaning ("Life is not a story"), Harari's clear and stimulating ideas will challenge you to think about the world we live in and the possible directions it might take.

**Reading Material:** *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* by Yuval Harari (ISBN-13: 9780525512196)

**Facilitator:** Fred Christensen has facilitated 31 study groups since 2008, including one on Harari's *Sapiens*.

### **Thursday:**

### *Time Magazine*

Brenda Berg

Thursdays, 10:30 am - 12:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/11;11/18;12/2;12/9;12/16;1/6;1/13;1/20

Format: Hybrid

The group selects three articles from *Time Magazine* each week to discuss, with a volunteer leader for each article. *Time Magazine* is the world's leading newsmagazine, featuring national and international affairs, health, business, culture, and entertainment.

**Reading Material:** All participants must have access to *Time Magazine* in print or digitally.

**Facilitator:** Brenda Berg is an educator and speech therapist and has taught in various places for 35 years. Brenda has three graduate degrees from the University of Illinois and has lived in

Champaign-Urbana since 1960. She has led the *Time Magazine* discussion study group many times and enjoys the diversity of expertise in the group.

### ***The Best American Mystery Stories of 2020***

Bev Herzog and Ron Baker

Thursdays, 11:30 am - 1:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/11;11/18;12/2;12/9;12/16;1/6;1/13;1/20

Format: Zoom Meeting

This session we will be reading and discussing the stories in *The Best American Mystery Stories 2020* edited by C.J. Box, with Otto Penzler as Series Editor. This edition includes twenty stories, most of which are written by authors that will be new to most of the study group, but also includes stories by James Lee Burke, Jeffery Deaver, and Tom Franklin. In his introduction, C. J. Box wrote, "Short stories done well can pack a punch like no other form of writing ... crafting a good short story is much harder than writing a full-length novel" and wrote that comparing the novel to the short story is like comparing a pearl necklace with dissimilar pearls to a single perfect pearl. He added, "This volume contains twenty perfect pearls."

Group members will be expected to read and be ready to discuss two to three stories each week, totaling approximately 45 to 70 pages. Group members will also be asked to volunteer to lead the discussion of a story or two of their choice, including researching the authors of the stories and developing study questions.

**Reading Material:** *The Best American Mystery Stories 2020* edited by C. J. Box, with Otto Penzler as Series Editor (ISBN-13: 9781328636102)

**Facilitators:** Bev Herzog is a retired geologist who has been an avid reader of mysteries since she was introduced to Nancy Drew and Trixie Belden as a child. She has co-facilitated a mystery short story study group during most study group sessions since 2011 to excellent reviews.

Ron Baker is a retired Federal Human Resources Manager and OLLI member since 2013. He almost exclusively reads mysteries. He has co-facilitated the mystery stories group with Bev for the last seven years.

**Friday:**

### ***Writing and Performing Poetry***

John Palen

Format: Hybrid

Fridays, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/12;11/19;12/3;12/10;12/17;1/7;1/14;1/21

Each week the facilitator will offer a model poem for discussion. During the following week, participants will write a poem based on, inspired by or in some other way growing out of the

model. They will bring copies of that poem to the next study group and read it aloud to the group to start the new meeting. This is not primarily a critique group, but brief comments are okay. At the end of the semester, participants will present a reading for other OLLI members, family, and friends.

**Reading Material:** none; the facilitator will provide the model poems.

**Facilitator:** John Palen has led this study group twice a year for a number of years. He is a publishing poet and has also led similar study groups for the Michigan Poets in the Schools project.

### ***Writers' Café***

Frank Chadwick

Fridays, 1:30 - 4:00 pm

8 sessions - 11/12;11/19;12/3;12/10;12/17;1/7;1/14;1/21

Format: Hybrid

Each week we meet to exchange news about writing in the Champaign-Urbana area, share a craft tip or exercise, and then (the main activity) read passages we've written and have the group critique them and make suggestions for improvement. We write all genres and forms: children's stories, young adult, science fiction, historical fiction, memoir, poetry, song, travel - you name it. All levels of experience welcome. We all start somewhere, and the best place is in the company of those who are working toward the same goals.

**Reading Material:** none

**Facilitator:** Frank Chadwick is a published historian and novelist and his *Desert Shield Fact Book* reached number one on the New York Times bestseller list. He has facilitated several OLLI study groups and taught four OLLI courses - *Writing the Novel*, *The 1973 Arab-Israeli War*, *World War II: A Look behind the Curtain* and *Greece and Persia: The War that Created History*.