

Presentation Descriptions

9:45-10:15 AM: Joe Belden – *Reading the Revolution*

This presentation would recommend reading original documents from the revolutionary period, with a specific focus on the Library of America. It is a 44-year-old nonprofit publisher of classic U.S. writing – fiction, poetry, history, journalism, letters, etc. Many of their volumes cover the revolutionary era. I would discuss very briefly, e.g., the single LOA volume *The American Revolution: Writings from the War of Independence*. It includes letters, journals, and diary entries, etc. from Paul Revere to Washington. Also has detailed 1774-1783 chronology and biographical notes on all the writers, famous and not so.

Presenter: Joe Belden has taught courses and lectured at OLLI, the Allende Institute in Mexico, and other venues. Latest OLLI courses taught have focused on Manifest Destiny and the US-Mexican War. He writes regularly for *The Daily Yonder* and other publications. From 1989 until 2015 he was Deputy Executive Director of the nonprofit Housing Assistance Council. He also worked at USDA, on Capitol Hill, and for several DC-based think tanks.

9:45-10:15 AM: Christina Fleps – *Oh, Say Can You SEE?! American Founders & Founding Moments—in Art!*

In this lecture-discussion, we'll examine some American founders and some great moments in America's founding years as portrayed by great American artists and illustrators. You'll see Ben Franklin with kite and key, George Washington with troops and charger, Betsy Ross with needle and banner, the Founder team with their Constitution, and more. Every picture tells a story!

Presenter: Christina Fleps is a retired lawyer and amateur art historian who has been teaching art history and leading museum tours for over seven years. She's been an OLLI SGL in art history since summer 2025. This is one of her three "America 250" courses that mine America's rich history of art and illustration..

9:45-10:15 AM: Bob LaRossa - *Triumphs and Tragedy at the National Institutes of Health*

Before World War II, biological research was conducted on limited budgets and funded largely by private foundations. The NIH recognized that understanding basic life processes required a broader scientific approach beyond targeting specific diseases, leading to the creation of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences. Although the institute's

relevance has periodically been questioned by politicians, its work has contributed to major scientific advances recognized through Nobel Prizes and the growth of biotechnology industries. This presentation will explore how and why this uniquely American research model became so successful. It will also examine concerns about current threats to these accomplishments.

Presenter: Bob LaRossa, a retired molecular biologist, is a Fellow of the American Academy of Microbiology. Bob trained at Johns Hopkins, Yale and Stanford. He has served as a permanent member of NIH study sections and on the Editorial Boards of the *Journal of Bacteriology* and *Applied and Environmental Microbiology*. Bob has chaired the Selection committee for the Sternberg Prize in Prokaryotic Molecular Biology and has led the Conferences Committee for the American Society of Microbiology.

10:30-11:00 AM: Penny Hansen - *So Where Are We? The Supreme Court Evolves*

Created under Article III of the Constitution, the Supreme Court emerged under the leadership of figures such as John Jay and, most significantly, John Marshall. Over the past 250 years, the Court has evolved through changing interpretations and precedents. Today's Court emphasizes a return to the Constitution's original meaning based on the founders' intent. The Roberts Court has shifted sharply from the more expansive constitutional interpretations associated with the Warren Court of the mid-20th century. This presentation will explore what these changing judicial philosophies mean in the context of today's political and social realities.

Presenter: Penny Hansen has been a member of OLLI at American University since 2011 and now serves on its Board of Directors where she recently co-authored its new five-year Strategic Plan. Her ever-evolving ten-week course, *Today's Supreme Court: A Class for Citizens*, has been presented 22 times to hundreds of participants at OLLI and in numerous other educational settings. She was educated at Skidmore College, Johns Hopkins University, and the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

10:30-11:00 AM: Carl Weichel - *"The Intriguing Roots of Our American Language"*

American English began evolving from its British roots as soon as early settlers encountered new cultures, landscapes, and experiences in the New World. Drawing on *Made in America* by Bill Bryson, this presentation explores how American history, politics, inventions, slang, food, and social customs shaped a distinctly American language. As

Thomas Jefferson observed, new circumstances required new words and new meanings for old ones. The discussion will include colorful stories about Puritan naming traditions, American attitudes toward swearing, and Benjamin Franklin's practical influence on everyday life. It will also touch on the naming of Washington, D.C., and Abraham Lincoln's thoughts on turning the Gettysburg Address into poetry.

Presenter: Carl Weichel has taught courses at OLLI AU and elsewhere for over a decade. His courses include The Hidden Brain, Cultural Complexities, The Transformative 1960s Decade, Political Polarization, Eastern Religions and Philosophy, The United Nations, Writings of David Brooks, The NY Times Book Review. He lives in the SF Bay Area and loves to travel.

10:30-11:00 AM: Ed Glynn - *Join Your Revolution? No Thanks.*

Ben Franklin and other leaders of the revolution tried to get the newly conquered French Canadians to join the struggle against Britain but were unsuccessful. Action by the British Parliament to favor Quebecois, and the long history of intense enmity between the French settlers and New Englanders defeated the Patriots' efforts to form a common bond. We will examine the brief unsuccessful military campaign to join Canada to the thirteen southern colonies and the effect of the migration to Canada of thousands of Loyalists at the end of the revolution.

Presenter: Ed Glynn was born in Boston but moved as a youngster to Montreal where he grew up and developed a great interest in the French and Indian War, the American Revolution, and the War of 1812. He is a graduate of McGill University and the Cornell Law School.

10:30-11:00 AM: Ellen Stanton - *How America Celebrated the Sesquicentennial of 1926*

Commemorations of the historic events of 1776 have evolved, evoking reflection not only on the past but also on contemporaneous events. We will discuss the America of 1926 and how the times impacted the Sesquicentennial celebrations, the least known fifty-year commemoration.

Presenter bio: Ellen Stanton served as an educator at the US Capitol Visitor Center and lead historic interpreter at George Washington's Mount Vernon, and for several years was chair of the Historic Alexandria Resources Commission. She has facilitated classes for 10 years at OLLI at the University of Denver and OLLI at American University.

11:15-11:45 AM: Steven Steinbach – No Kings?

“No Kings.” But why not? Where did our collective antipathy to monarchy come from? How was it exemplified in both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution? And despite this, how has the fear of “monarchical” power been a pervasive theme throughout United States history?

Presenter: Steven Steinbach just completed leading his second OLLI Study Group, which focused on the Constitution and equality. He was a partner at the law firm of Williams & Connolly LLP and then a history and government teacher at Sidwell Friends School. He is co-editor of *With Liberty and Justice for All?: The Constitution in the Classroom*, published by Oxford University Press.

11:15-11:45 AM: Kim Weichel - *The Transformative 1960's Decade: A Focus on '68*

The 1960s were a decade of dramatic social and political change marked by civil rights activism, antiwar protests, and major cultural shifts. Americans challenged segregation, questioned government authority, and redefined ideas of personal freedom, while music, art, and youth culture transformed mainstream values. These tensions reached a peak in 1968 with the Tet Offensive, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy, and widespread protests and unrest across the country. This presentation will explore the defining events of the era and the lasting lessons and impact they continue to have today.

Presenter: Kim Weichel has taught courses at OLLI AU and elsewhere for over a decade. Her courses include The Hidden Brain, Cultural Complexities, The Transformative 1960s Decade, Political Polarization, Eastern Religions and Philosophy, The United Nations, Writings of David Brooks, The NY Times Book Review. She lives in the SF Bay Area and loves to travel. Kim is an author and her upcoming book is called “*Redesigning Nonprofits: Catalysts for a Stronger Democracy*”.

11:15-11:45 AM: Albert Cheh - *The Franklin Stove: A History of Fuel Depletion, Conflict and Transition*

Although best known for his experiments with electricity, Benjamin Franklin also designed innovative cast iron stoves to address harsh winters, fuel shortages, and indoor smoke during the Little Ice Age. His stove designs aimed to heat homes more efficiently while using less fuel, reflecting broader economic and environmental challenges in colonial America. The story of the Franklin stove also highlights the role of iron furnaces, slave labor, deforestation, and the displacement of Native Americans in the early American economy.

This presentation will examine how the transition from wood-burning stoves to coal reflected America's larger shift from a biobased economy to the fossil fuel era we continue to grapple with today.

Presenter: Albert Cheh has a BA in Chemistry from Columbia and a PhD in Biochemistry from UC Berkeley. He is Professor Emeritus of Environmental Science and of Chemistry at American University and from 2018 has taught OLLI classes on basic environmental science, climate and energy, the Covid virus and Federal support of science

11:15-11:45 AM: Bob Greenberg - The Forgotten Seal of the US: Moses, Pharaoh and the Promise of Liberty

One of the little-known episodes in American History was that when Jefferson, Franklin, and Adams met to develop a seal for the United States their recommendation was a depiction of Moses leading the Israelites out of Egypt and Pharaoh and his Army being drowned in the Red Sea. While it did not become the final seal, the choice by three of the key Founders was a reflection how the Exodus Story, and the moral logic of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) more generally, was the rallying cry that united the colonists to declare independence and create a nation based on liberty and equality that had never before existed in history. This is that story.

Presenter: Robert (Bob) Greenberg is the Founder and CEO of G&H International Services, Inc and has spent more than thirty years working with federal, state, and local governments to strengthen community resilience, including advising the White House and multiple federal agencies and leading initiatives addressing vulnerabilities identified after 9/11. He has also been active in volunteer efforts supporting women's sports and at-risk youth, including co-founding Women's Professional Soccer, and is currently co-authoring *Covenant and Constitution* with Daniel Slate of the University of Notre Dame as part of an initiative to "Restore the American Story."