

Course Descriptions, Fall Term 2016

Much Ado About Everything: Dante's *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*. Three years ago, we slogged to the bottom of Dante's hell. But we left the job unfinished. Now it's time for the whole trip. This fall, we'll do a quick flyover of the *Inferno* and then start our grand ascent to Paradise. Even if you were in the first class, I urge you to experience the whole poem—perhaps the finest piece of Western literature—from the first footfall. How many times do any of us have the chance? (The plan is to read the *Paradiso* in the winter term.) Come gawk at the sinners in their torment before we start climbing Mount Purgatory, the most emotional, artistic, and indeed human part of the poem. We'll use John Ciardi's translation, available in inexpensive Signet editions. The books are available at both Oblong Books in Millerton and at the Book Loft in Great Barrington. No assigned reading for the first class.

Instructor/Organizer: Mark Scarbrough. Mondays 10:00 AM - Noon, at Geer Village, September 12 – November 14 (10 sessions)

Cole Porter. This class will explore Cole Porter's vast body of work (using video and audio materials) in relation to the extraordinary times in which he lived. Amazingly two world wars and major social upheavals seem to have passed the gilded Porters by. He was born in Peru, Indiana in 1891; he said farewell to the Midwest for a prep school education at the Worcester Academy in Massachusetts, went on to graduate from Yale, and then dropped out of Harvard Law School in 1916 to begin his glamorous international life and career. He lived in Paris during World War I where he married his wife, Linda. The Porters returned to the U.S. for the Roaring 20's and had homes in New York and California as well as Williamstown, Massachusetts. They knew and entertained everyone who was anyone, and because both were independently wealthy they were unscathed by the Depression and World War II. Porter was one of the few theatrical luminaries who wrote both the music and lyrics for his many shows on Broadway and Hollywood films including (1916) *See America First*, (1928) *Paris*, (1920) *Fifty Million Frenchmen*, (1932) *The Gay Divorce*, (1934) *Anything Goes*, (1939) *Dubarry Was a Lady*, (1947) *The Pirate*, (1948) *Kiss Me, Kate*, (1953) *Can Can*, (1954) *Silk Stockings*, (1955) *High Society*, (1956) *Les Girls*. He continued writing until his death in 1964.

Instructor/Organizer: Thomas Gruenewald. Mondays 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Geer Village, September 12 – October 17 (6 sessions)

On Memoirs. This workshop will offer an introduction to the art of writing memoir. It will be prefaced by a discussion of the characteristics of good memoir writing and is designed to help people discover their stories in a supportive environment. Students will be asked to write short pieces from prompts and share them with the class as well as read excerpts from contemporary and classic memoirs. With a Master's Degree in creative non-fiction and a background writing biographical sketches and magazine articles, Brenda Underwood will help participants explore the significance of people, places and events in their lives. Students will be encouraged to draw stories from memory and organize them into a narrative.

Instructor/Organizer: Brenda Underwood. Tuesdays, 10:00 AM – Noon at Geer Village, September 13 – October 18 (6 sessions)

The Roberts Court, 2015-2016. The death of Justice Antonin Scalia and the Senate's refusal to consider President Obama's nominee to replace him are enough in themselves to make a course on this year's Roberts Court. Together with the key decisions the Court has handed down before June as well as its forthcoming rulings in abortion, affirmative action, and immigration cases, they promise stimulating analysis and discourse.

Instructor/Organizer: Larry Rand. Tuesdays 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 20– November 1 (7 sessions)

Play Reading. This fall we will continue to read works of a contemporary American playwright, Lanford Wilson, who won a Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1980. Please obtain Lanford Wilson: Collected Works, Volume II, 1970-1983.

Instructor/Organizer: Rosemary Farnsworth. Wednesdays, 10:00 AM - Noon at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 14 – November 2 (8 sessions)

Let's Talk Poetry – Cancelled! Welcome to a course that intends to help you enjoy poetry more than you ever did before. In a discussion group format we will read poems selected by me or sometimes selected by you. Our concentration this fall will be on 20th century poets in addition to some classical poets, so I would like participants to purchase one book: "100 Essential Modern Poems" edited by Joseph Parisi, former Editor of the Poetry Magazine, published by Ivan Dee, Chicago, 2005.

I believe that when a person hears the truth of good poetry, he or she reverberates inside, like a bell chiming, either because they know that truth already and needed to hear that someone else did as well, or because their yearning heart has heard the truth for the first time. I hope to introduce you to some good poetry and some good poets. I'm looking forward to seeing you.

Instructor/Organizer: Maura Wolf. Wednesdays 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 14 – November 2 (8 sessions)

Great Decisions. Topics chosen by the Foreign Policy Association include: *Middle East Alliances; The Rise of ISIS; Kurdistan; International Migration; Korean Choices; United Nations; Climate Geopolitics; and Cuba and the U.S.* This year will mark expanded collaboration with students and faculty from Housatonic Valley Regional High School. All registrants should order the 2016 briefing book (\$25) by phone (1-800.477.5836) or online at fpa.org (click on Great Decisions and select order).

Instructor/Organizer: Richard Collins, Tracey Atwood, John Lizzi & Peter Vermilyea. Thursdays 10:00 AM - Noon at Geer Village, September 15 - November 10 (9 sessions).

Homer and Western Literature. This course will teach that Homer is the basis of western literature. Students will learn to read passages of ancient Greek literature in original Greek. Passages from ancient literature will include Homer, Aeschylus, Aristophanes, and Sappho. Their influence on later western literature will be illustrated by looking at works by Roman and English authors such as Ovid, Virgil, Shelly, Byron, and Shakespeare. Students will not need a familiarity with ancient Greek or Latin for this course, just an interest in language.

Instructor/Organizer: William Trowbridge. Thursdays, 1:00 – 3:00 PM at Geer Village, September 15 – October 20 (6 sessions)

The Middle East Since 1945. At the Versailles Conference in 1919, President Woodrow Wilson championed democracy and self determination, then looked the other way as Britain and France carved up the Middle East. What was to be self determination became mandate. After World War II, the United States became a more active member of the faction attempting to control the Middle East. In 1953 it staged a coup in Iran, ousting democratically elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh and replaced him with the Shah. This course is an attempt to unravel, through documentary films, events in the Middle East from 1945 to today.

Instructor/Organizer: Larry Rand. Fridays, 10:00 AM – Noon at Noble Horizons Learning Center, September 23 – October 28 (6 sessions)