

The Learning Lab

Woodstock's Own Adult Education Experience

Spring, 2019 classes



The Genius of Mozart
Native American History and Cultures
The Cathars: Saints or Heretics?
The Legacy of Edmund Burke & Thomas Paine
The Gifts of the Goddess
Vermont Journalism in Turbulent Times

The Incomparable Genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

Peter Fox Smith

Peter Fox Smith, the long-time host of the popular opera program on VPR and author of the authoritative book, *A Passion for Opera*, will lead this fifth class for the Learning Lab. Using his incomparable collection of historic recordings and his encyclopedic knowledge of opera, Peter has enthralled his classes on Verdi, Wagner and Puccini. Here is a summary of his new class:

Mozart, for several reasons, has been called “The Father of Modern Opera” and yet in several ways he also was the culmination of long standing operatic traditions. That is the basic issue of this course. It will be explored by a consideration of 10 of his 22 operas from the first operas composed when he was 12 to his two last works, *The Magic Flute* and *La Clemenza di Tito* that were composed just before his all too early death. And, obviously, no understanding of his genius is possible without music from the three Mozart/da Ponte masterpieces *La Nozze di Figaro*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Così fan Tutte*.



Wednesdays, April 24 – May 22, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Parish Hall of St. James Church
(The class will meet on one Tuesday instead, on May 7)

Peter Fox Smith came from a family of singers and wrote his Ph.D. thesis on Richard Wagner at Harvard University. He has taught opera courses at Harvard, Dartmouth, and elsewhere. From the inception of Vermont Public Radio, Smith presented his popular weekly program, *Saturday Afternoon at the Opera*, for nearly forty years. He is also the author of the indispensable book, *A Passion for Opera: Learning To Love It: The Greatest Masters, Their Greatest Music*. In addition to cultivating his passion for opera, Smith writes poetry and gives readings of his work at colleges here and abroad. He has published three books of poems. He lives in North Pomfret, Vermont, with his wife, Joanne.

Native American History and Cultures

Ananda Forest

This course is an overview of Native American cultures in North America. We will focus on five primary cultural areas with an emphasis on specific tribes: Northeast Woodland tribes--the Iroquois Confederacy or Haudenosaunee; Southeastern tribes--the Cherokee; Southwest tribes- the Anasazi and their Pueblo descendants; the Pacific Northwest--the Haida; the Great Plains--the Lakota.

Considering there were as many as 600 distinct Native “Nations” at the time of Contact, this is a brief tour; however, in the short time we have, we will be able to observe broad overarching patterns within the wild mosaic of First Peoples and also to drill down in detail to examine more closely a handful of profoundly influential tribes.

From a conventional historical outlook, this course is grimly straightforward: the European peoples won and the Indigenous peoples lost in a bloody and excruciating struggle. However, the same could be said about a Jewish prophet named Yeshua. In that narrative, also, the steel wielding empire crushed the people of the Spirit. However, there is a lot more to both stories.

In this class, we will both begin to come to grips with the heartrending outcomes of this clash of cultures AND really dig into the wisdom and power of certain Native American visionaries and traditions and examine their profound relevance for some of the challenges the Human Race is facing now.

Thursdays, April 25 - May 30, 2:00 – 4:00 29 River St.

Ananda Forest: The first thing I ever wanted to be when I grew up was an Indian. Although my 5-year-old attempts to eat roots didn't come to much, as luck would have it, my Dad's big sister eloped with an actual Native American and he became my mentor for twenty years, introducing me to the way of the shaman. I went on to study with Michael Harner and Sandra Ingerman of the Foundation for Shamanic Studies from 1995-2005 and also co-created and co-directed a center for shamanism and spiritual ecology in Southern Vermont. I have been leading sweat lodge and conducting pipe ceremony for over twenty years. I have also been teaching Native American History and Cultures at the Community College of Vermont since 2005.

The Cathars: Saints or Heretics?

Rai D'Honoré

Who were the Cathars? What was their philosophy? What induced them to submit to being burned alive rather than recant their beliefs? Were they Manicheans, Gnostics, Bogomils, followers of an ancient Egyptian tradition? Were they Christian? Certainly the Roman church didn't think so, but then the Cathars didn't think that the Roman church was either: they called the pope the Anti-Christ.

Catharism grew from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries especially in the south of France, but also somewhat in northern Italy and parts of Germany and Spain. By the thirteenth century, it was the majority belief in the south of France and rapidly becoming more popular than the Roman Church.

At a time when lack of religious toleration was at its height, the Cathars taught that no one should judge another because of their beliefs. At a time when societal classes were static, they believed anyone could be what they wanted to be. At a time when women were despised as second-class citizens, within their ranks some of their most respected teachers were women.

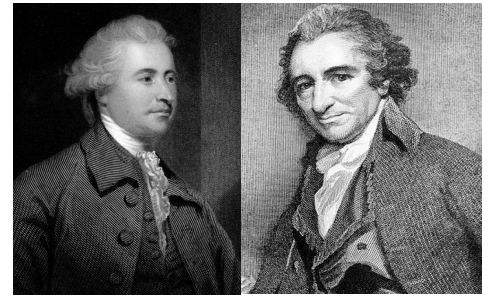
So much nonsense has been written about the Cathars, from fanciful "historical novels" to automatic writings coming from some long-dead teacher. Serious academic scholars writing theses use documents that may be completely inaccurate. There are even Catholic apologists who deny they ever existed. We will examine the known facts and see what we can extrapolate from their societal background and an unpublished manuscript written by a pupil of one of the famous Cathar teachers.

Tuesdays, April 9 – 30, 2:00 – 4:00 Norman Williams Public Library

Rai d'Honoré has a Ph.D. in Modern Languages. She has taught at colleges and universities in the US and overseas including The American University, The Catholic University, University of Maryland, University of Lesotho, University of Mugla, and most recently East Carolina University, where she was Director of the Language Academy and on the faculty of the Medieval & Renaissance Studies Department. Her specialties include courses on the Middle Ages, Western Civilization and film. Currently President of Occitan Cultural Initiatives, she has been a college dean, executive director of a nonprofit educational foundation, vice president of an international management company, assistant general manager of a boutique hotel and marina on the Mediterranean, an archeological tour guide for jeep safaris and a mountain guide for horseback trails in Africa.

The Legacy of Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine: Conservatives and Liberals in Modern America

Ron Miller



In 1790, British parliamentarian Edmund Burke wrote an incisive critique of the French Revolution and the ideas that had given rise to it. In response, the British-American revolutionary Thomas Paine composed his classic defense of radical social change, *The Rights of Man*. The philosophical and political concepts underlying their debate set the stage for the two major contending ideologies of American politics, known in modern times as “conservative” and “liberal.” By carefully considering the assumptions and beliefs that Burke and Paine expressed, we can gain a better understanding of the essential differences between conservative and liberal worldviews, and perhaps a better appreciation of the necessary relationship between them.

Burke has often been claimed as a founder of modern conservatism, while Paine, whose position was even more radically democratic than Jefferson’s, has been a hero to the political left. The argument between them asks us to question the legacy of the Enlightenment, the meaning of “reason” and “liberty,” and the optimal relationship between the individual and society.

This is a course in intellectual history: We will not be surveying historical events or personalities, but the history of ideas and their influence. In our time, many scholars looking at the rise of populism, nationalism and religious revival are wondering whether the “age of reason”—the Enlightenment—has run its course. Was Paine’s hopeful idealism unwarranted? Does Burke’s more sober and cautious worldview better explain or address what we are seeing in the world today? We’ll discuss questions like these.

Fridays, April 26 – May 24, 10:00 a.m. – Noon - 29 River Street
A Saturday morning class may be added if there is enough interest.

Ron Miller has taught numerous courses for the Learning Lab on American, Canadian and Vermont history as well as contemporary issues. He received a Ph.D. in American Studies from Boston University and previously taught at Goddard and Champlain colleges. He is the author or editor of nine books on educational history and philosophy, and another on Vermont independence. Ron is the coordinator for the Learning Lab and also serves as co-president of the board of Norman Williams Public Library.



The Gifts of the Goddess

Nan Bourne

What we call prehistory was simply the time before humans used writing to tell stories or create tales with a purpose, what we today might call propaganda. To call it “prehistory” implies that “real” human history arrived later, dismisses this extremely long & richly formative period as somehow both negligible & basically unknowable, & unnecessary to know. In essence, it has been repressed.

Thus, to unlock the secrets of this millennia-old period, that contained humanity’s birth & childhood growth, we must turn to the art of stone — ancient statues, structures & carvings , & later the rituals & beliefs of the oldest human cultures. In this silent world we find the original powers of women, powers very much needed today.

This course will examine what scientists have discovered of this earliest & most crucial period of human life, how it was forced underground & is now re-emerging in a mixture of old & new forms.

Wednesdays, April 24 – May 15, 10:00 – Noon, 29 River St.

Nan Bourne was educated at the Woodstock Country School, Radcliffe College, & in 1975 received her certificate in Transactional Analysis from the Cambridge Center for Transactional Analysis. She has spent much of her life researching issues related to gender.

Vermont Journalism in Turbulent Times

A series of talks by local, regional and statewide journalists

How are Vermont journalists dealing with this fast-paced age of internet and social media communications, 24/7 news coverage, a polarized and fragmented public, “fake news” and financial pressures on traditional media? Join us for a series of three conversations with editors and executives who will reflect on the challenges and opportunities they face today. They’ll talk about why independent journalism matters and what role journalists have in our communities and public affairs.

Leaders of publications at the local, regional and state levels will discuss their work and engage with the audience and with Woodstock’s own circle of eminent retired journalists—John Mathews, Bob Hager, and Karen & Sandy Gilmour. These conversations should be wide-ranging and informative.

All talks will take place on these Saturday afternoons on the Mezzanine at Norman Williams Public Library, Woodstock, from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m.:

May 4: **Anne Galloway**, Founder and Editor of VTDigger

May 11: **Maggie Cassidy**, Editor of the *Valley News*

May 18: **Phil Camp**, President and owner, *The Vermont Standard*

This program is free and open to the public; there is no need to register.
We hope you’ll join us!



Founded in 1999 as WESAW (Winter Education Series at Woodstock), the Learning Lab provides a high quality adult education experience that is open to all.

A volunteer-run organization, the Learning Lab charges modest fees for its courses, which may be reduced or waived for those on limited income.

Contact the Learning Lab by email: tllwoodstock@gmail.com
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www.thelearninglabwoodstock.com