

The Learning Lab
Woodstock's Own Adult Education Experience
Fall, 2019 classes



The Persistence of Racism: Part III
Woodstock's Conservation Heritage
America in the 1960s

Introduction to Memoir Writing

Thomas Paine, Edmund Burke & the Origins of Left & Right
Behind the Scenes in the Vermont Statehouse

The Persistence of Racism: Part III

Margaret Edwards

This fall seminar I hope to sustain the dynamic discussions of race and racism that occurred in the classes of Parts I and II. This time, instead of reading novels or non-fiction prose, seminar members will be asked to attend (in four consecutive weeks) four American films that focus on racial issues. These four films, plus various short, photocopied readings handed out during class, will constitute the curriculum. We will ask ourselves the question famously posed by Rodney King, a black victim of police brutality in California. Speaking of whites and blacks in America, he asked, “Can’t we just get along?” To that question, we will add, “Can we be friends?”



The prospect of interracial friendship will be explored as we discuss the four films. Two are up-beat and optimistic: “Driving Miss Daisy” (1989) and “Green Book” (2018). Two are pessimistic dramas, both directed by Spike Lee: “Do The Right Thing” (1989) and “BlacKKKlansman” (2018). Each film will be shown during the week 3 times, each time at the NWPL’s Room of Requirement that now has a media center: Monday morning 10:30-12:30, Monday afternoon 2-4, Tuesday evening 6-8. *Even if you have already seen the film, you’ll be asked to see it again (and even take notes) so it’s fresh in your mind.*

Discussions will take place in three sections (not to exceed 12 people each) in private homes in Woodstock.

Class dates are four consecutive fall Thursdays: October 24 and 31, November 7 and 14.

Section 1: 10 a.m.— 12 noon, at the home of Gail Stickney, 18 The Green, Woodstock

Section 2: 1 p.m. — 3 p.m. at the home of Nan Bourne, 29 River Street, Woodstock

Section 3: 3:15 p.m.— 5:15 p.m. at the home of Honey Hager, 22 The Green

Margaret Edwards spent 30 years as a professor of English at the University of Vermont. Her specialty was Modern & Contemporary American Poetry. She also taught writing seminars, including one entitled “Expository Writing: the Personal Voice.” On her retirement in 2001, she moved from Burlington to Barnard, Vermont, where she and her husband now live. She earned her B.A. from Bryn Mawr College, and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Stanford University.

Woodstock's Conservation Heritage

Rolf Diamant, Vikke Jas, and staff of Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP

The conservation legacies of the three families after whom Woodstock's national park is named represent a microcosm of many of the themes that defined the larger environmental movements of the 19th and 20th Centuries. The first half of this course dives deep into that history, while the second half explores how the national park is carrying conservation work into the 21st Century. Each session features a different activity – from reading-based discussions, to an art tour in the families' mansion, to a walk in the woods (weather permitting).

Participants will learn about the life of George Perkins Marsh and read excerpts from his great work *Man and Nature*, consider the Billings family and their conservation work during the Gilded Age, and become better acquainted with the philanthropy, ecotourism and other conservation work of the Rockefellers. Then we will learn how the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park became established in Woodstock and how it is contributing to sustainable forestry practices and conservation leadership today.

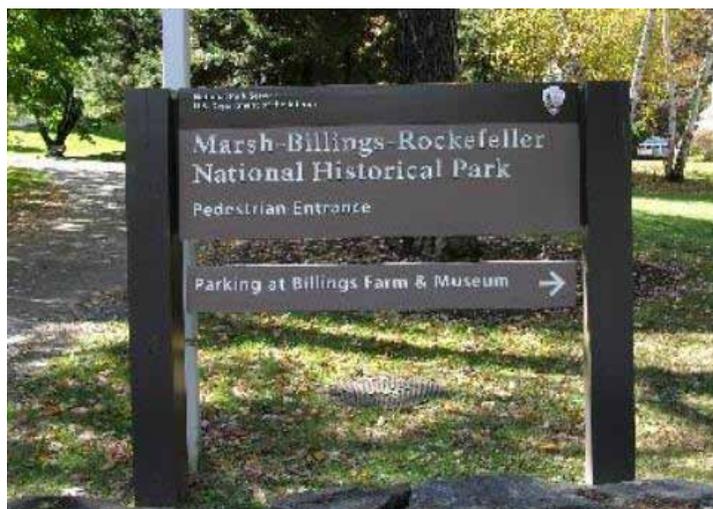
Tuesday afternoons, October 8 - November 12, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.

The Forest Center at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park

Rolf Diamant is retired from a 37-year career with the National Park Service, having served as superintendent of several national historical parks and sites including Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site and Olmsted Archives, Lowell National Historical Park, Longfellow House Washington's Headquarters National Historic Site and Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park. He currently serves on the faculty of UVM's Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources.

Vikke Jas hold a B.S., M.S. and a Ph.D in the Environmental Sciences and Studies fields. She teaches environmental science and natural history and runs an environmental consulting practice. She lives five minutes from George Perkins Marsh boyhood home, and has served as dedicated volunteer at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park.

Several Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park staff will serve as session instructors, including Park Curator Ryan Polk and Natural Resource Manager Kyle Jones, as well as representatives of the park's Facility Management division, and the National Park Service Stewardship Institute, which is housed at the park.



America in the 1960s: Seeds of the Culture Wars

Ron Miller

The political and social turmoil of the 1960s unleashed cultural tensions in American society that are in many ways still with us. In this course, we'll explore the historical forces that produced this contentious decade, beginning with events in the 1950s that prepared the ground for it. We will consider the civil rights movement, the women's movement, protests against the Vietnam War, the youth "counterculture," Supreme Court decisions under Earl Warren, urban riots, the Cold War, and other elements of the time.

America entered the 1960s, under the moderate and genial president Dwight Eisenhower, held together by what scholars called a "liberal consensus." But lurking cultural fault lines--of race, class, region, ideology and generational identity—erupted dramatically during this pivotal decade. While well known "progressive" movements took shape during the 1960s, so too did the modern conservative movement. The *National Review*, John Birch Society, Young Americans for Freedom, and the presidential campaign of Barry Goldwater galvanized a right wing response to perceived excesses of the left, setting the stage for the rise of the Reagan "revolution." The '60s are still with us, in many ways.

Mondays, September 9 – October 21 9 a.m. to Noon 29 River St.

Ron Miller, coordinator of the Learning Lab, has been teaching this popular series of courses on American history, as well as Vermont and Canadian history and current events, since 2012. Previously, he taught at Goddard and Champlain colleges, founded two journals in the field of education, and helped establish an independent school in the Burlington area. Ron received a Ph.D. in American Studies from Boston University. He has written or edited ten books on alternative educational approaches, including *Free Schools, Free People: Education and Democracy After the 1960s*, and edited a book about the Vermont independence movement, *Most Likely to Secede*. In addition to his work with the Learning Lab, Ron also serves as the President of the Norman Williams Public Library board of trustees.



Introduction to Memoir Writing

Margaret Edwards

This introductory course should be subtitled “Finally Getting It Down.” It operates as a “gateway” to all that might follow. A person having taken this course often feels the urge to keep on writing, working to complete a memoir (or family history) begun in the introductory class. This course qualifies you to attend all subsequent “Memoir Reunion Workshops.”

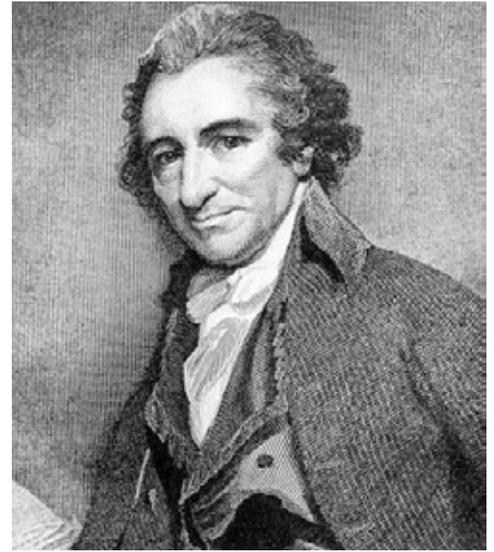
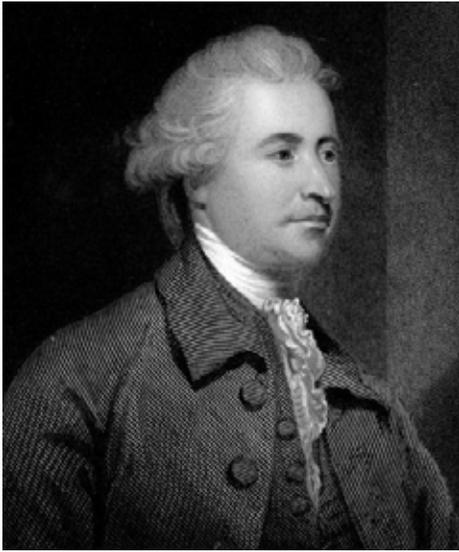
To begin a memoir is not an act of egotism, it’s an act of generosity. A memoir lets you leave behind for family members (and for students of history) an account of your particular era embedded in a narrative of your personal life. What lessons you’ve learned, what difficulties you’ve overcome, what good fortune you feel you should celebrate—all of this is valuable and interesting. A class will give you the discipline to sit down and actually write, as well as an audience for your output. If you fear you can’t get started, this class (and its facilitator) will get you going—it’s guaranteed.

Tuesdays, September 3 - October 8, 10:00 a.m. – Noon

Norman Williams Public Library, History Room

See Margaret Edwards’s bio for “The Persistence of Racism”





Thomas Paine, Edmund Burke, and the Origins of “Left” and “Right” Politics

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: Rather than focusing on historical events or personalities, we will consider 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. Saturdays, September 14 – October 19, Norman Williams Public Library

See Ron’s bio for America in the 1960s.

Behind the Scenes in the Vermont Statehouse: A conversation with our local legislators

What's it like to serve the public as an elected official? How does the work of our state government get done? How does an idea become a bill and how does a bill become a law and then how do regulations get written to administer the law? Join us for an engaging and informal conversation with four law-makers from the Woodstock area. Representatives Charlie Kimbell, Zach Ralph, and Jim Harrison, and Senator Alison Clarkson, will talk about their experiences in Montpelier, their workload, and how they view their role representing their constituents. They will reflect on what it's like to balance conflicting demands and expectations. They'll explain the legislative process and their interactions with various state agencies.

After the panel participants share their stories, audience members can join the conversation and ask questions. This is not, however, a forum for debating issues or policies, but an opportunity to learn more about the personal experience of taking part in public affairs, and about what takes place behind the scenes in the making of the laws and programs that affect all citizens of the state.

Saturday, November 16, 2:00 – 3:30, Norman Williams Public Library

This is a free program, open to the public. No registration is required.

Sen. Alison Clarkson (D) was elected to the state Senate in 2016 after serving six terms as representative from Woodstock, Reading and Plymouth.

Rep. Jim Harrison (R), represents Bridgewater, Killington, Mendon and Chittenden, and has served since 2017.

Rep. Charlie Kimbell (D) represents Woodstock, Reading and Plymouth. He is in his second term.

Rep. Zacharia Ralph (P), a freshman in the legislature, represents Hartland, Windsor and West Windsor.

Moderator: Learning Lab coordinator Ron Miller

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
or by phone at (802) 310-2169

Learn more about us at www.thelearninglabwoodstock.com

