

# The Learning Lab

*Woodstock's Own Adult Education Experience*

Winter, 2020 classes



“Overture” by Judith Taylor

**Facing the Environmental Crisis**

**Winter Culinary Class**

**American Exceptionalism Takes its Toll**

**The Persistence of Racism: Part IV**

**Overture: Opening to Wonder**

**“A Republic, If You Can Keep It”**

**Up and Down the Flagpole**

## **Facing the Environmental Crisis: Seeking Equilibrium and Balance**

**Andy McLaughlin and Michael J. Caduto**

### **Part One: The Deep Roots of the Environmental Crisis**

We will begin by comparing and contrasting two global environmental problems: ozone depletion and global warming. Ozone depletion now seems like a relatively easy problem with a global treaty pointing towards a solution. Global warming, in contrast, seems like a much more profound problem with no easy solution. Then we will look more deeply into the cause of global warming, analyzing it as a problem of an excess of “waste” (CO<sub>2</sub>). We will draw on Donella and Dennis Meadows’ analysis of the limits to growth starting with their controversial book *The Limits to Growth* in 1972. From there we will examine a few questions: Why is such a problem occurring now?; Why is there an overwhelming imperative for economic growth?; Is there an alternative? We will then look at several proposals for a steady state economy, such as those proposed by J.S. Mill, John Maynard Keynes, and Herman Daly.

### **Part Two: A Time Before Vermont: Indigenous Traditions for Living in Balance**

For more than 11,000 years the Alnôbak (Abenaki) and their ancestors have lived and sustained themselves with ways of life molded by practical needs, cultural traditions and spiritual beliefs. Through stories, music, slides, discussion, demonstrations and a circle dance—this program helps participants imagine a living past. We’ll explore the traditional land use practices and Earth stewardship ways of life among the Alnôbak, the impacts they have had on their surroundings and how the land, in turn, has molded their culture. This program looks at the relationship and deep connection that the Native peoples of this region maintain with their homeland, *Gedakina*, “Our Land,” and explores how these traditions can inform and impact our contemporary relationship with the environment in this time of transition.

Tuesdays, January 7 – February 4, 10:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. – Norman Williams Public Library

**Andy McLaughlin** has been concerned about environmental issues ever since 1972 when he read *The Limits to Growth* by Donella and Dennis Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William Behrens. This work has turned out to be prophetic and remains highly relevant to our present situation. Andy is a professor emeritus from the City University of New York, Lehman College. One of his specializations there was environmental philosophy. His major publication in that area is *Regarding Nature: Industrialism and Deep Ecology*. Currently he is chair of the board of Sustainable Woodstock.

**Michael J. Caduto** is known for dynamic and engaging presentations weaving science, storytelling, song and stewardship. He has worked closely with indigenous peoples in North America, Europe and the Middle East. His books include *Keepers of the Earth*, *Earth Tales from Around the World*, *Native American Gardening*, *Through a Naturalist’s Eyes: Exploring the Nature of New England* and *A Time Before New Hampshire: The Story of a Land and Native Peoples*. Michael awards include the Teacher’s Choice Award, Aesop Prize and Brimstone Award. He founded P.E.A.C.E®—Programs for Environmental Awareness & Cultural Exchange ([www.p-e-a-c-e.net](http://www.p-e-a-c-e.net)) and is Executive Director of Sustainable Woodstock ([www.sustainablewoodstock.org](http://www.sustainablewoodstock.org)).



Ira White



Rafael Vasquez

## Winter Culinary Class

### Chefs Ira White and Rafael Vasquez

If you are a home cook who enjoys pleasing your family and dinner guests with tasty and interesting meals, this course is for you !

The Learning Lab has once again engaged two professional chefs, Ira White and Rafael Vasquez, to demonstrate their skills at our popular culinary class on two separate nights. Class participants will be treated to a professional demonstration, have copies of the recipes to follow along, and have an opportunity to ask questions and learn some valuable kitchen techniques. Best of all you will get to sit down and enjoy the prepared recipes. This course is limited to 15 students and has been historically sold out so we recommend that you register quickly.

The cost of the course is \$65 (includes both nights)

The class will meet on Mondays, January 13 and February 10, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., with a snow date the next day at the same time.

**Ira White** holds a Bachelors degree in Fine Arts and is Executive Chef of Cloudland Farm ([www.cloudlandfarm.com](http://www.cloudlandfarm.com)). Much of his culinary experience was gained by working under previous Cloudland chefs Nick Mahood and Jeremy Glover. The restaurant is unique in the sense that Chef White prepares meals completely from scratch using farm raised ingredients. All of the meats and much of the produce is raised right at Cloudland Farm. The Emmons Family (Cathy & Bill) have operated the farm restaurant for 9 years. They are open by reservation only for a 3 course fine dining experience right on the farm grounds on Friday and Saturday evenings. Ira's class will be held at Cloudland Farm in Pomfret.

**Rafael Vasquez** is a native of the Dominican Republic with 11 years of experience and is the new executive chef at Daily Catch Restaurant ([www.thedailycatch.com](http://www.thedailycatch.com)). Rafael has been a sous chef in celebrated restaurants in New York City which include the popular Soho Grand in Manhattan. The Daily Catch started in Boston's North End in 1973. They now have 4 locations, the newest of which is on Central Street in Woodstock. The Daily Catch specializes in preparing fine Italian style seafood. Rafael's class will be held at the Freddura Farm in Barnard.

# American Exceptionalism Takes its Toll

## William Boardman

American exceptionalism permeates our culture and has for a very long time. Americans were taught to believe in American superiority long before we were able to think for ourselves. “America is the greatest country in the world.” It’s an article of faith. It can’t be proved. Other countries didn’t vote us #1 in a free and fair election. What is the measure of “greatness” for a country? Do genocide, slavery, racism, imperialism and endemic poverty count? If the United States is really the greatest country in the world, what does that say about the world?

Especially in 2020, American exceptionalism will be taking its toll in the Democratic primaries, in the aftermath (or continuation) of impeachment, in coping (or not) with the climate crisis, and in whatever other crises that continue or arise as we trudge forward.

This highly participatory class will explore issues that arise in the continuing context of the developing presidential race.

Wednesdays, January 29 – March 11, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.  
Norman Williams Public Library

**William Boardman** has led several classes in media and politics for the Learning Lab. He writes regularly for Reader Supported News—rsn.org. A collection of his essays – “EXCEPTIONAL – American Exceptionalism Takes Its Toll” – was published in 2019 by Yorkland Publishing of Toronto.

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## The Persistence of Racism: Part IV

### Margaret Edwards

“If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” That was my motto as I put together this fourth go-round. Again, as in the fall 2019 seminar (Part III), instead of reading assigned novels or non-fiction prose, participants 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. This time our focus will be “Black Self-Image and Black Identity.” Each film will be shown during the week 3 to 4 times before it is discussed. Again we will use the new media center at Woodstock’s Norman Williams Public Library.

Film showings will occur: Monday morning 10:30-12:30, Monday afternoon 2-4 p.m., Tuesday afternoon 2-4 p.m. and Tuesday evening 6-8 p.m. *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. The four films chosen for the winter term are “Glory, Glory,” “Black Panther,” “The Hate You Give,” and “Harriet.”*

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

Woodstock. Class dates are four consecutive winter Thursdays: January 23 and 30, February 6 and 13.

Section 1: 10:00 a.m.— Noon, at the home of Paulette Watson, 29 Elm St., Woodstock

Section 2: 1:00 — 3:00 p.m. at the home of Nan Bourne, 29 River Street, Woodstock

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

**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.

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## **OVERTURE: Opening to Wonder**

### **Judith Taylor**

OVERTURE: Opening to Wonder offers practical, provocative and seriously playful strategies for using a personal journal as a creative resource and an instrument of self-discovery. Although writing is one focus of this presentation, it will be less about learning to write than it about learning to see.

Questioning, breaking ground, coping with resistance and complexity, finding meaning in metaphors, letting go, turning and returning, are all part of the process addressed by OVERTURE. Its methods and materials include a lively medley of folklore, images, recipes and expressive exercises to address the challenges inherent in the creative process, and explore the myths that shape our lives and give meaning to our work — be it a painting, a poem or the composition of a life.

There’s more. In fact, “There’s More” is an expressive exercise in OVERTURE that deals with the tangled yearnings for shelter and the frontier.

OVERTURE offers an invitation to the frontier and a guide with which to make it home.

Saturday, February 29, 3:00- 4:30 p.m.

Norman Williams Public Library

**Judith Taylor** is an artist and writer whose work reflects her particular interest in the creative process.



## **“A Republic, If You Can Keep It”: Is the Constitution Resilient Enough for Our Time?**

**Ron Miller**

Benjamin Franklin, as he walked away from the last session of the Philadelphia convention that had drafted the Constitution, was asked what form of government had been created in the secretive meetings over the previous four months. “A republic, if you can keep it,” he is said to have replied. Franklin recognized that a government deriving its powers from “the people,” no matter how carefully or cleverly designed, would not endure without the informed and willing participation of its citizens. The Constitution is no stronger than the paper on which it is printed if the public does not uphold the ideals it represents.

In this course/discussion group, we will review the origins and purposes of the Constitution and consider many of its key elements. Then we will ask whether this eighteenth century document, even with its various amendments over the years since, is strong enough to withstand the erosion of civic life that we are witnessing in the twenty-first century. The founders worried about the rise of demagogues, but they could hardly imagine the spellbinding power of television and social media. They recognized that corruption, partisanship, oligarchy and interference by foreign powers could jeopardize republican government, and we might wonder whether they would have even attempted to set one up in the face of the realities of our age.

Can the Constitution withstand the assaults of a decadent democracy? What options do we have today? Let’s explore these questions together.

Tuesdays, February 11 – March 10, 10:00 a.m. – Noon  
At the home of Nan Bourne, 29 River Street, Woodstock

**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 President of the Board of Norman Williams Public Library.

## Up and Down the Flagpole

**Dov Taylor**

“Ax the Tax,” “Keep Your Guns,” “New Hampshire is What America Was,” “Live free or die”—these were the slogans that got Meldrim Thomson, Jr. elected governor of New Hampshire for three consecutive terms (1973-1979). He lowered the flags to half-staff on all state buildings more than fifteen times to push his political agenda, but when he did so for Good Friday “to memorialize the death of Christ on the Cross on the first Good Friday,” Rabbi Dov Taylor and four of his colleagues sued to prevent him from this flagrant breach of Jefferson’s wall of separation between church and state. The case went from the federal district court to the First Circuit Court of Appeals to the U.S. Supreme Court in less than seventy-two hours and got decisions all along the way.

The case takes on greater trenchancy in light of the Supreme Court’s June 2019 decision that the forty-foot Peace Cross in Maryland, originally called the Calvary Cross—which stands on public property and is maintained with public funds—does not violate the First Amendment’s ban on government establishment of religion. Join us as Dov discusses, “Up and Down the Flagpole.”

This is a free lecture, open to the public. Pre-registration is not required.

Tuesday, March 10, 2020, 4:30 p.m.  
Norman Williams Public Library

**Dov Taylor** is Rabbi Emeritus at *Makom Solel Lakeside* in Highland Park, Illinois and rabbi of *Chavurat Ki-tov: A Gathering for Jewish Life and Learning*, based in Woodstock, Vermont. He is a political activist opposed to Israel’s illegal occupation of Palestine. His translation of the first Hebrew novel was recently excerpted in Yale University’s new series, *Jewish Culture and Civilization*.



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](mailto:tllwoodstock@gmail.com)  
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**[www.thelearninglabwoodstock.com](http://www.thelearninglabwoodstock.com)**