

The Learning Lab  
Woodstock's Adult Education Experience  
Fall, 2021 classes

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Portrait artist Carolyn Egeli in 2007, with Cardinal Egan and her portrait of him. Lecture 4, Oct. 7

The Learning Lab is back on track this fall after our COVID hiatus, and we offer the courses immediately below—in addition to a Thursday afternoon series of six lectures by six experts. (See pages 7 and 8).

**Who Gets to Vote?**

**A Closer Look at Robert Frost**

**How to Deal with Difficult People...and look forward to it!**

**The Third Turning in Human Evolution**

**What, So What, Now What? A Current Events Roundtable**

**The Thursday Afternoon Lecture Series**

# Who Gets to Vote?

## Ron Miller

It is often assumed that the citizen's right to vote is the essence of democracy, yet today we are seeing widespread and determined efforts to make the voting booth less accessible to certain portions of the population. Also, the long-established practice of gerrymandering, now supercharged by technology, allows politicians to choose and empower their preferred voters rather than submit to the will of the majority.

Is American democracy in danger? Or must we admit that our nation has never actually been a democracy?

This course offers an overview of the history of suffrage—the right to vote—in the United States. From the time of the founding of the republic, there has never been a consensus supporting a universal right to vote. Those without substantial property or education, as well as entire classes of people—women, people of color, immigrants, those convicted of crimes—have been denied access to the vote. The struggle for universal suffrage in our purported democracy is never-ending.

We will review the various phases of this struggle, from Jacksonian populism to the Fifteenth Amendment to the women's suffrage movement to the Voting Rights Act and beyond. We will ponder why these victories are so often watered down, if not reversed. We will consider the anti-democratic stance of the Supreme Court in landmark cases such as *Minor v. Happersett* (1875) and *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013). What we are seeing today is nothing new; restrictions on suffrage are as American as apple pie.

## When & Where & Who:

Section 1: 8 Tuesdays, from September 21 -- November 9 10 a.m. - 12 p.m. at the Woodstock History Center, 26 Elm Street [class size: 15]

Section 2: 8 Wednesdays, from September 22 -- November 10 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. in Nan Bourne's garden room, 29 River Street [class size: 15]

**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. He serves on the board of the Norman Williams Public Library.

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# A Closer Look at Robert Frost

## Margaret Edwards

Robert Frost (1874-1963) wrote several poems that are currently some of the most famous in the English language. This 6-week course will seek to prove that within each of them there is more than meets the eye. We will study other Frost poems, less well-known, that cast an interesting new light (and some shadows) on the old chestnuts.

As a bonus, for those who take this class, there will be three optional field trips arranged. We will visit the special collections of three nearby libraries: at Middlebury, at the University of Vermont, and at Dartmouth. We will examine their Robert Frost holdings and speak with their knowledgeable archivists.



Robert Frost in England, 1913

## When & Where & Who:

Section 1: 6 Tuesdays September 21, 28, October 25, 12, 19, 26 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Cynthia Stevens's living room, 76 Grove Hill Road, South Woodstock [class size 8 -- a small class size encourages discussion]

Section 2: 6 Thursdays September 23, 30, October 7, 14, 21, 28, from 10 a.m. to noon at Betsy Edmunds' house, 79 Central Street, Woodstock [class size 8]

[Section 3 – possible if there is an overflow and a waiting list—to meet in a Woodstock house TBA]

**Margaret Edwards** spent thirty 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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# How to Deal with Difficult People... and Look Forward To It!

## Steven Shama

Difficult people bring forth emotions in us that we'd prefer not to have. We'll find creative ways of dealing with such people, so you make peace, not war. There are positive messages difficult people may bring to us. Class participants will be asked to suggest difficult scenarios—for example, an encounter with an angry, demanding, or controlling person. We will generate many different approaches to solving these frustrating situations.

What role does empathy play in understanding the difficult person? What are the specific ways and words to use to make people feel valued, feel listened to, and feel cared about? Handouts will be provided giving answers and approaches to life's most abrasive interactions. The sessions will be intense yet filled with humor.

This course is guaranteed to be memorable, practical, and life/spirit enriching. You'll learn specific techniques and phrases to use in placating a person and calming a difficult situation. You'll learn ways to make someone feel valued and cared about. You'll learn how to set boundaries on a person's unacceptable behavior. You'll discover ways of stopping people from stealing your joy, as well as techniques for finding the positives in almost every situation.

## When & Where & Who:

3 Mondays, September 27, October 4 & 11, from 9 - 11 a.m., in Nan Bourne's garden room, 29 River Street, Woodstock, Vermont [class size 15]

**Steven Shama** is a professional speaker and storyteller who has given scores of presentations and workshops over the last 25 years throughout the USA, Canada, and Israel. His topics and his welcoming and engaging presence help his audiences learn to better communicate and connect, even in challenging times. His degrees are from Columbia College (A.B.), Temple University (M.D.), and Harvard School of Public Health (M.P.H.)

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## The Third Turning

### Ananda Forest

This class will have an interdisciplinary approach, a mix of history, anthropology, and philosophy. We live in a frighteningly challenging time. The long-term prognosis for the economy, the climate, and the planet is one of pessimism and gloom. Everyone can feel something is going terribly wrong, but no one is clear what the solution is.

The human race has come to the "Third Turning" on its 200,000-year evolutionary walk. The First Turning was the coincident development of fire and language, which permanently separated us from the rest of the animal kingdom and, ultimately, set us free to leave Africa and inhabit the planet. The Second Turning was the development of agriculture, which in a very short period turned us into literate urban dwellers and created the basic template for human social organization for the next 5000 years. Think "pyramid." Even though there have been advances during this

period (democracy, fossil fuels, computers, etc.), none of them have significantly altered the basic social template developed in Sumer (now southern Iraq) and Egypt.

This template has put us on course to destroy all life. Its basic drivers—wealth and status---make it impossible for any pyramidally-structured organizations to solve the very problems they have created. As Einstein observed, "We can not solve our problems with the same level of thinking that created them."

What is the next level of thinking? We will spend a class or two on the First Turning---development of fire and language and their impact on social organization. We will then spend a class or two on the Second Turning---how agriculture revolutionized social organization. And then we will explore what might be coming next. We will be looking for "the next level of thinking," ways of problem solving and social organization likely to drive the "Third Turning." These ways have already shown up but are not yet widely accepted or practiced.

### **When & Where & Who:**

6 Mondays: September 27, October 4, 11, 18, 25, and November 1, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Nan Bourne's garden room, 29 River Street, Woodstock, Vermont [class size 15]

**Ananda Forest** attended Oberlin College (graduating with highest honors in anthropology) and Yale Law School. He has been a teacher for the past 30+ years, including the last sixteen years at the Community College of Vermont, where he is an adjunct instructor of anthropology, history, and mythology. He lives in Brattleboro with his wife, Ishana, and their rescue dog, Little Bear.

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## **What, So What, Now What? A Current Events Roundtable**

### **Steven Shama and William Boardman**

We all have opinions, sometimes strong ones, about "current" events and topics (past, present, and future), as we try to answer all kinds of questions such as:

- Who's responsible for climate change?
- Why is vaccination controversial?
- How can we cope with racism?
- What can be done about misinformation and lying?
- Is an American consensus possible?

The goal of this class is to examine current issues in order to understand:

- (1) What they are, the "What?"
- (2) Why they matter (or don't), the "So What?" and...
- (3) What we can or should do about them, the "Now What?"

In the first session, the class will look at the present and shape a consensus as to what matters to the group. This will serve as the framework for the 5 future classes, with ample space for unforeseen events in the news which might prompt new discussion points.

We expect all to be engaged in dynamic discussion, allowing for participants to speak their views/minds. The atmosphere will be one in which differing opinions can be expressed in a confidential and nonjudgmental way. But we will also expect everyone to contribute to the factual basis for any issue. An important objective will be, as much as possible, to reach a conclusion as to what can be done to resolve any particular issue.

### **When & Where & Who:**

6 Tuesdays: September 28, October 5, 12, 19, 26, and November 2, from 10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. in Nan Bourne's garden room, 29 River Street, Woodstock, Vermont. [class size 15]

**Steven Shama** is a retired physician, who continues a career as a storyteller and as a professional speaker. He gets great satisfaction in engaging in meaningful conversations on important topics, clarifying the issues while looking for universals and essences, and—most important—converging on practical solutions.

**William Boardman** has written about politics for Reader Supported News [rsn.org](http://rsn.org) since 2012 and has published a selection of his RSN pieces in 2019 entitled *Exceptional! American Exceptionalism Takes Its Toll*.

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## **The Thursday Afternoon Lecture Series**

**From September 23 - October 28, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m.**

**To be held in the upstairs Mezzanine of the Norman Williams Public Library on Woodstock's Green.**

**Audience size: 30 [The Woodstock Fire Department has set this limit.]**

### **Lecture 1: Sept. 16**

#### ***Artists' Works That Reflect the Times — Charlet Davenport***

"It is hard to predict at this moment what to title a talk for this autumn. My work at the Bennington Museum garden has gotten me thinking in new ways. I will speak about other local artists' pieces as well as my own. I am still working with images from the nude. Beyond that, I've been going back to the subject of breast plates and masks (faces)...seen anew as we masked up ourselves during the pandemic. Artists' works must move with and reflect the times." (A lecture with slides.)

**Charlet Davenport** is an artist who lives in Woodstock and has exhibited her work since 1964. Her skills are multi-media: paintings, drawings, ceramics, sculptures, and installations. With her husband, Peter Davenport, she founded and co-directs Sculpture Fest, an annual show of New England artists whose works are displayed on their land on Prosper Road. Charlet is also a teacher in community college settings, at Dartmouth's OSHER program, and at the AVA gallery in Lebanon, NH. She has served on arts-related boards of directors in Vermont and New Hampshire and is currently a board member of the Augustus Saint-Gaudens Memorial Trust. From Dartmouth, she holds a Master of Arts and Liberal Studies (MALS) degree.

[See the photo on the back cover of this catalog.]

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## **Lecture 2: Sept. 23 *Two Sides of the Courtroom* – Ted Donlon, Esq.**

A look at America's Criminal Justice system by a former NYC prosecutor turned criminal defense attorney. After the presentation there will be an ample Question & Answer period.

**Ted Donlon** graduated in 1972 from the Restoration Carpentry program at the North Bennet Street Industrial School, located in Boston's North End, and then went on to work as a carpenter in Boston and New York City. After years of suffering the ups and downs of the construction economy as well as chronic back problems, he applied to law school. In 1997 he graduated from the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law at Yeshiva University in New York City. He worked in the City, first as a prosecutor and later a criminal defense attorney, semi-retiring from the practice of law in 2019. He now lives with his wife in Barnard, Vermont, in a house he renovated using his carpentry skills. They visit their Staten Island home intermittently.

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## **Lecture 3: Sept. 30 *Oriental Rugs from A-to-Z* — Wayne Ridley**

"My presentation will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on antique tribal and village rugs. I will attempt to cover the major facets of oriental rugs; the women who wove them, along with the dyes, construction, care and repair, washing and upkeep of good rugs. I will give tips on purchasing at auction, valuing rugs, books to consult, decorating issues, and more. I will bring select samples of rugs and trappings to view and discuss, and I encourage participants to bring either rugs or photos for a show and tell."

**Wayne Ridley** first gained experience in oriental rugs as a high school student working for a large importer in Syracuse, NY. After graduate school, armed with a degree in marital and family therapy, and after several years in private practice, he "saw the handwriting on the wall with regard to the frustrating complexities and time-consuming nature of insurance reimbursement"—a revelation which helped him find his true calling: antique oriental rugs. "I've never looked back." Wayne has been in Barnard 32 years, dealing in antique oriental rugs and living in a house he designed and built himself. Adjacent to his house is the gallery he built.

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## **Lecture 4: Oct. 7 *The Life of a Portrait Artist* — Carolyn Egeli**

This professional artist will describe some of her past portrait commissions and discuss the challenges the individual portraits presented and how she handled them. She will explore the purpose of a portrait and what it represents to the client. Her presentation is designed to be pertinent to the current exhibit of High Renaissance portraits of the Medici clan showing in NYC at the Metropolitan Museum, as well as its Alice Neel exhibit. On display as she speaks will be some of Egeli's portraits. Following her remarks will be a chance for members of the audience to ask questions and enter into a discussion.

**Carolyn Egeli** makes her living as a portrait artist. She was born in 1948 in Valley Lee, MD. She studied at Moore College of Art in Philadelphia. Her father, the renowned portrait painter Bjorn Egeli (b. 1900), was her primary teacher. Her mother, who was also a very accomplished painter, gave her daughter excellent advice. Carolyn's professional career started when she was only 17. "I began as a sketch artist on a ferry boat that went between Hyannis Port to Nantucket." She sketched portraits of the tourists. A list of Carolyn Egeli's general accomplishments and former clients are on her webpage *carolynegeli.com*. [See the photo on page 1 of this catalog.]

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## **Lecture 5: Oct. 14 *Learning To Be Human(s)* — Nan Bourne**

A view of human social evolution from the Genesis story to the present day, by a lifelong feminist with a deep interest in evolutionary anthropology. The presentation will consist of a discussion of the "three phases" (so far!) of the human story followed by a Q + A.

**Nan Bourne** graduated from the Woodstock Country School (1951), Radcliffe College (1955), and the Institute of Transactional Analysis in Cambridge, MA (1976). She has always been perplexed as well as fascinated by the conundrum of gender relations. She was active in the 2nd wave of the women's movement (1969-73) and helped found the MA chapter of the National Organization for Women (NOW). She has spent her later life reading about "pre"-history (revised since the 1970s) & connecting such reading to "history." She has 4 children, 7 grandchildren, and lives in Woodstock.

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## **Lecture 6: Oct. 21 *Gun Violence* — Bob Williamson**

Gun violence is America's and Vermont's ongoing public health crisis. This will be a presentation about how to fix the crisis, with a review of what works and what doesn't work in addressing the problem through legislation and by other means. With firearm deaths and gun sales at record highs during the pandemic, more needs to be done, and there is a way forward.

**Bob Williamson**, a native of Chicago, earned his B.A. at Claremont Men's College in 1971 and an M.A. in English from Indiana University in 1975. He held various editing, writing & teaching jobs for some years after that, but he became a gun violence prevention activist 33 years ago when a deranged woman went on a shooting spree in his children's elementary school in Winnetka, Illinois. Six youngsters were shot and one, eight-year-old Nicky Corwin, was killed. His two daughters, Clare and Kate were spared, but only by dumb luck. Clearly the status quo wasn't working. That tragedy changed Bob's career path to public safety activism. He chaired Chicago's annual Walk Against Gun Violence for a decade for the Illinois Council Against Handgun Violence and leveraged support from that event for Illinois's Safe Neighborhood Law (which lowered drive-by shootings in Chicago by 41%). Since moving to Vermont in 2004, Bob now serves on the Board of Gun Sense Vermont, which spearheaded three historic gun reforms in 2018.

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Charlet Davenport with her installation “Amour, not Armor” – Lecture 1, Sept. 16

The Learning Lab is a volunteer-run organization and 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) or by phone at (802-457-9799)

# The Learning Lab – Fall 2021 Registration Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Who Gets to Vote? \$40 per person**  
(with Ron Miller) 8 classes, Tuesdays or Wednesdays  
CHOOSE Section 1 (Tues.) \_\_\_ OR Section 2 (Wed.) \_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**A Closer Look at Robert Frost \$40 per person**  
(with Margaret Edwards) 6 classes on Tuesdays or Thursdays  
CHOOSE Section 1 (Tues.) \_\_\_ OR Section 2 (Thurs.) \_\_\_ \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**How to Deal with Difficult People \$25 per person**  
(with Steven Shama)  
3 Mondays : September 27, Oct. 4, and Oct. 11 9 - 11 a.m. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**The Third Turning... \$40 per person**  
(with Ananda Forest)  
6 Mondays : Sept. 27, Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25 & Nov. 1: 2 - 4 p.m. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**What, So What, Now What? \$40 per person**  
(with Steven Shama & Wm. Boardman)  
6 Tuesdays : Sept. 28; Oct. 5, 12, 19, 26; Nov. 2 10:30 am-12:30 pm \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**The Thursday Lecture Series \$40 per person**  
Enrolling in the Series for \$40 allows you to attend all 6 lectures.  
6 Thursday afternoons: Sept. 16, 23, 30, & Oct. 7, 14, 21 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Fill out this form & make out your check to The Learning Lab, then mail both to P. O. Box 283, Woodstock, VT 05091.** You are enrolled **only** when this form & your check are received. Fees are reduced for those on limited incomes.