

# **YASSAR COLLEGE FOR TEACHING LEARNING INSTITUTE**

**NEWSLETTER  
ISSUE 15 JAN 2026**

# VASSAR COLLEGE LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE

## NEWSLETTER

Issue 15, January 2026

### VCLLI: A Noble Village

*Instead of noblemen, let us have noble villages of men. --Henry David Thoreau*

This past semester I was immersed in the thinking of Henry David Thoreau. The close reading of *Walden*, or *Life in the Woods* was expertly guided by **Judith Saunders** in the class *(Re)-Reading Thoreau*. In the chapter “Reading”, Thoreau laments the fact that people abandon education when formal schooling ends. He wrote: *It is time we had uncommon schools, that we did not leave off our education when we begin to be men and women.*

Vassar College Lifelong Learning Institute is one of those “uncommon” schools that offers adults an opportunity to continue learning. Thoreau would applaud our “noble village”.

The first Lifelong Learning Institute in the U.S. began at the New School for Social Research (now the New School) in NYC in 1962 as an experiment in “learning in retirement”. By the 1980s fifty programs had started. Many more colleges and universities followed. They adopted the concept but used different names, such as The Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement (HILR) or The PLATO Society of UCLA. Locally, Marist College (Center for Lifetime Study), Bard College (Lifetime Learning Institute), and SUNY New Paltz (Lifetime Learning Institute) offer programs.

Vassar’s program began in 2017 through the efforts of Mihai Grunfeld, who recruited a team of enthusiastic volunteers. A vibrant village evolved. Currently VCLLI has 363 active members, not including the many presenters who volunteer their time.

In a broad sense, the expression “it takes a village” refers to any complex goal that requires the combined efforts of many individuals. Our newsletter highlights some of the *noble* efforts and achievements of our VCLLI *village* during the Fall 2025 Semester. It honors the *noble people*—administrators, presenters, class managers, technical assistants, and students—who come together to sustain LLI.

I applaud the many the *noble writers* and *photographers* who contributed to this issue.



Special thanks to our cover artist, **Marty Zlotkin**,  
and our proofreader, **Sandy Corwin**.

Yes, “it takes a village”!  
Jo Hausam, Editor



## VCLLI Membership Rises

According to **Sudhir Desai**, Co-chair of the Membership and Registration Committee, at the start of the Fall 2025 Semester, VCLLI had 363 total members (which does not include presenters), and of those, 78 are new members.



**Janet Burati** and **Adeline Anderson**, two new members, were happy to join the LLI community.

At the end of the semester, they summarized their experience: *As first time VCLLI participants, we were so impressed with our courses, the presenters, and of course, our fellow students. Also impressive are those who work behind the scenes...whether it be organizing all the courses, sending out emails to keep us informed, or compiling this amazing newsletter. Kudos and thanks to all.*

### Impressions of a Newbie

by **Catherine Bokor**

I joined Vassar College Lifetime Learning Institute last summer, so this fall semester was my first. When I received the course information I was very impressed by the number and variety of the offerings. I knew that we have many people in our community who are so well-informed in a multitude of subjects. What impressed me was how many of our smart neighbors took the time and trouble to organize their thoughts and create lectures, study groups, etc. giving generously of themselves. My first thought was: This is the United States I chose as my second country.

As I told my friends, my joy of attending classes started when I parked my car and took a stroll on campus to my class—enjoying nature, the young students and bumping into people whom I hadn't seen for a while.

I signed up for four classes: two one-day lectures, and two four-week classes. That seemed to be the right way to dip my toe into this new experience. I enjoyed them all, although “enjoy” may not be the right word for the two Holocaust-related sessions. Although both had a happy ending, because the parents of the lecturers survived and thrived, there was a lot of loss and tragedy behind these lives.

Both *Sala's Gift: A True Tale of Strength, Friendship and Love*, presented by **Ann Kirschner**, and *Escape: Europe and the Middle East, 1918-1948*, presented by **Eve Gendron**, were tributes to their parents who survived the Holocaust but lost loved ones. I have been a student of the Holocaust all my life, but every time I read or hear about new survivors, I am touched and encouraged by their resilience, smarts, compassion, and ability to go on and be loving spouses, parents, and grandparents. Hearing about Ann's mother and Eve's father was a treat.

When I read the book recommended by **Shelley Tatelbaum** for her *Living the Four Agreements* class, I was not excited about the subject. But Shelley presented the Four Agreements in such a warm, personable way, that I was hooked after the first class.

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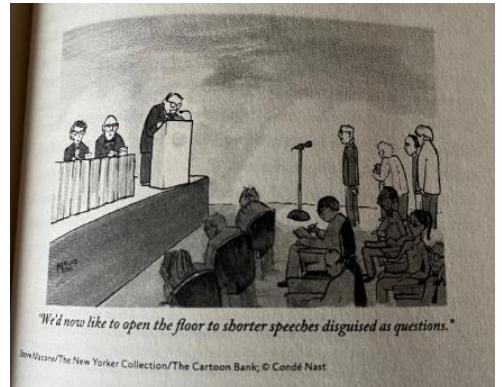
We believe that by the time we are in our seventies, we know ourselves. Yet this class opened my eyes to some of the small ways we can improve our habits and thus our lives.

With these improvements, I was ready for **Paul Stoddard's** class, *What Can We Do about Political Polarization*. Well, well, well. That class was exciting. I discovered that there are multiple attempts and organizations that help close this gap.

Even though we didn't have major disagreements in our group, we had plenty to debate and discuss. Paul bravely and patiently balanced listening to as many opinions as possible—and there were many—while still completing his planned agenda. At the end of the class, I had the feeling that we could have gone on for another four weeks. My classmates were well-informed and passionate. I left each class with more optimism than I had at the start. Paul followed up every class with an email containing lists of organizations and books that are trying to bring people together.

To show that I was impressed by Paul's grace managing the class, I sent him a cartoon (shown on the right) that I found in a book I am reading entitled *Think Again: The Power of Knowing What We Don't Know* by Adam Grant. It so happens that this book fits in with this class. How often do we discover that our opponents know something of which we are not aware? All we need to do is listen with an open mind.

[Caption: "We'd now like to open the floor to shorter speeches disguised as questions." Source: *Think Again*, Penguin, 2023]



In my first semester with VCLLI I found many students who are willing and eager to listen with open minds and hearts. What can be better than that?

### Catered Lunch Attracts Many on First Day of Classes



The Hospitality Room was filled—wall-to-wall—with hungry students partaking of the catered lunch provided to all on the first day of classes.



## **VCLLI Is a Hudson Valley Treasure**

by **DonnaMarie Jones**

Have you ever signed up for something, only to find yourself struggling to push yourself out of your home and actually attend the event? Well, not so with VCLLI!

My husband found out about VCLLI through a former classmate. We decided to go for it and, after a few sign up snags, we were in.

We did the online orientation, attended the welcome party, and I signed up for three on-campus classes: *Writing the Story of our Lives*, *Political Polarization*, and *Frances Burney*. Plus, two more online classes: *Frances Perkins* and *Sala's Gift*.

Not once did I drag myself out of my house to go to a class! Being on the Vassar campus was like a shot of adrenaline. The school has an energy. And being around others who love to continue learning and teaching is vibrancy personified!

My *Writing* and *Polarization* classes challenged me to move out of my comfort zone. Could I truly write something that could be interesting to others? Could I challenge myself to look past our differences to what still unites us as Americans?

Frances Perkins was an eye-opening class on a woman who was the real architect of the New Deal. An unknown, a woman, a social worker—what she did at a time when women only supported the men who worked in the halls of power was nothing short of amazing. And the same could be said of Frances Burney who challenged the conventions of her day quietly yet confidently. And, lastly, *Sala's Gift*—it was actually a gift shared with us—learning her survival story and of the people who helped protect her.

I can't wait for next semester, for the chance to explore new ideas and perspectives. VCLLI is a Hudson Valley treasure and my husband and I are very grateful to be a part of it.

Looking out the  
Kenyon Hall lobby  
window.

Photo by Jo Hausam.



## A Festive Fall Party for Members



On Oct. 3, 2025, bassist Robert Bard, guitarist Jonathan Ahmadjian, and violinist Claudia Forest provided music at a Welcome-Back party where seasoned and new members met and mingled. It was held in the spacious Vassar space known as the Aula.

During the event, Executive Council members and Committee Chairs spoke about the work they do. (See next page.)



Photo of wine glasses by Jennifer Henion; others by Jo Hausam.



Member sip wine, eat hors d'oeuvres, and converse in the glow from Aula's large windows.



## The Organizational Branches of VCLLI

**THANK YOU** to the behind-the-scenes managers and decision-makers who direct LLI activities.

**VCLLI is administered by a General Council:**

the Chair: **Mihai Grunfeld**  
 Vice Chair: **Neila Radin**  
 Treasurers: **Yvonne Sewell & Carolyn Lampack**  
 Secretary: **Maribeth King**  
 At-Large Members: **Carole Wolf & Terry Quinn**  
 Administrative Assistant: **Rachel Etkin**

and the **Chairs of Committees:**

Executive Committee, Chairs: **Mihai Grunfeld & Neila Radin**  
 Curriculum Committee, Chair: **Sybil DelGaudio**  
 Classroom Managers Committee, Co-Chairs:  
**Nora J. Quinlan & Patricia Fitzpatrick**  
 Membership and Registration, Co-Chairs: **Sudhir Desai & Paul Stoddard**  
 Hospitality Room Committee, Chair: **Tim Ryan**  
 Special Events Committee, Co-Chairs: **Diana Salsberg & Terry Quinn**  
 Communications Committee, Chair: **Joanne Valeo**  
 Newsletter Editor: **Jo Hausam**  
 Phone Support Coordinator: **Howard Spilke**  
 Course Catalog Managers: **Sybil DelGaudio & Neila Radin**  
 Photographers: **Sarah Kennedy & Marian Pompa**  
 Newsletter and Catalog Artwork: **Marty Zlotkin**  
 Webmasters: **Mihai Grunfeld, Neila Radin, Rachel Etkin**  
 Member Engagement Committee: **Ed Kinkade**  
 Transportation Committee: **Terry Quinn**



Photo by **Sarah Kennedy**

## In-Sight into Your Vision

by Nadine Revheim

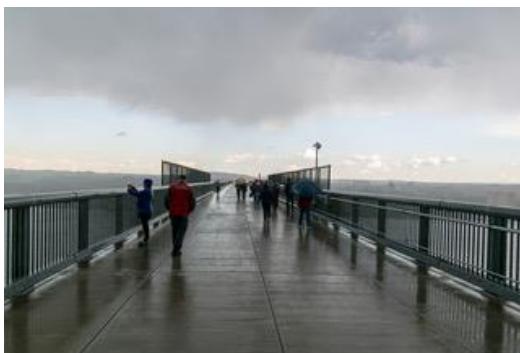
There are times when you want to sign up for a VCLLI course and you cannot register because the class size limit was reached, which is disappointing. That was how I imagined the outcome of trying to sign up for **Nancy LeVine's** fall course, *Exploration of Your Vision*, might end. But surprisingly, I got into the class despite the class size limit of five students.

To say it was fortuitous to be one of only three students enrolled is an understatement. It was an experience that changed my “visual voice” because it was a Masterclass with an award-winning professional photographer who supported each student’s personal goal for the course with critical analysis, feedback and guidance in an individualized and meaningful way. Our required weekly assignment was to go into the field and bring up to ten 8x10 photos back to class each Friday. The idea was to incorporate the feedback each week into the subsequent photo shoots.

There were three of us, each with our own specific photo missions. **Kathy King** wanted to focus on light and shadows in her quest for shooting street scenes, unique building structures, and Hudson valley landscapes.



**John Wargo** chose to continue with photographing his *Walkway Over the Hudson* series with visitors and activities on the converted rail bridge in Poughkeepsie.



(Continued on next page.)

And I, **Nadine Revheim**, decided to use *Boscobel House and Gardens* to photograph its autumnal transition as a backdrop for capturing a sense of calm and stillness in my photos.



Each of us worked on our goals to broaden our way of seeing our subject matter with Nancy's individualized critique, but also learned vicariously by hearing the feedback given the other students.

The six weeks went by quickly. We absorbed Nancy's advice and recommendations as if we were a sponge soaking up all the information; we pinched ourselves about being so fortunate to work with a photographer of Nancy's caliber. (See bio below.)

Our class ended with a 'show' of five photos presented by each student that had been honed by cropping images into the essential aspect of the scene as per the guidance and direction over the weeks. There was a true sense of 'before and after' that we could see ourselves. Our vision had been changed.

The bottom line: if you care about your own passion for photography—even if you are only using an iPhone—and see another course taught by **Nancy LeVine**, do sign up! Don't be intimidated by her professional background. Nancy is warm, honest and engaging. You'll have no regrets. You will see that your vision will be changed for good.

**Nancy LeVine**, a highly acclaimed photographer who published *Senior Dogs Across America* (2016) and *A Dog's Book of Truths* (2002), is also known for her assignments for Seattle Children's Hospital, Starbucks, Microsoft, and PBS as well as published photos in *Vogue* and *The New York Times*, and multiple galleries in NY, Houston, and Seattle. She is also known for a photographic portrait project *Art: The Moving Thread* and most recently, *Beacon in Quarantine*, an historic photographic record of 88 households during Covid lockdown. Travels to Africa for elephant orphans and to Antarctica are recent subjects for her photos.

## Frances Perkins: An Amazing Life

by Ruth L. Kava

I've known that Frances Perkins was an important influence on FDR, but I never realized how extensive her background and input were. I learned so much from the class *Frances Perkins: the New Deal First Lady*, presented by **Al Vinck** and **Linda Bouchey**.

What an amazing life! We have much to thank her for!  
I enjoyed the presentation very much!

## ***The Four Agreements Class Review***

by **Cathy Law**

It is said that when the student is ready, the teacher appears. When I signed up for the class called *Living The Four Agreements*, I expected a thoughtful review of Don Miguel Ruiz's best- selling book. What unfolded surprised me. The four week class took us on a deep dive into self-empowerment and spirituality which I found both healing and galvanizing.

Our instructor, **Shelley Tatelbaum**,\* didn't just teach *The Four Agreements*; she embodied them. She is a practicing therapist and brought a rare blend of spiritual insight and clinical grounding to our classes. She guided our discussions with clarity and compassion, offering thoughtful responses to our questions and helping us navigate the more challenging aspects of the material.

We were also fortunate to have her husband, **Ron Tatelbaum**,\* as our class manager. His timely input and entertaining examples of living the four agreements enriched our understanding of how to walk the walk. (\*See *Spotlight on...* after this article.)

Each class focused on one of the four agreements:

### **First agreement: Be impeccable with your word**

Sounds straightforward, right? In fact, it is profoundly challenging in practice. Words can be magic or poison— the difference is up to us. The challenge of speaking impeccably, which comes from the Latin root meaning "*without sin*," is to create the reality that you intend. We explored how every word carries an energetic charge. When we use our words to uplift, affirm, and clarify, we align with truth and integrity. When we gossip, criticize, or speak in ways that deny our own worth, we harm ourselves and others.

Shelley encouraged us to stalk our shadow side to flush out where our words do us a disservice. "*Your words are like seeds*," she explained, "*but they germinate into beauty or toxins depending on how you tend the soil*." Repeated words become beliefs, and repeated beliefs shape perception and your action will grow from there. So ask yourself: Are you tending weeds or flowers?

So your dedication to speaking your truth is also your promise that you will align yourself spiritually to your highest calling- the best and most authentic expression of yourself that you can reach. To speak falsely or cruelly is to betray that divine spark. The first agreement is so key it forms the foundation on which the other three agreements hinge.

### **Second agreement: Don't take anything personally**

What people say to us is a projection of their own inner world. When people are unkind, it often says more about their wounds than our worth. In class we practiced the art of stepping back, recognizing projections, and refusing to drink the poison offered. When done correctly the second agreement acts like a kind of social superpower against unhelpful feedback. Guess what it is based on? The first agreement! I think of the second agreement as a kind of spiritual immune system.

(Continued on the next page.)

### Third agreement: Don't make assumptions

Assumptions are shortcuts that often lead to conflict. We assume we know why someone is silent or what they meant by a sharp glance or tone, but too often we can be wrong. And while assumptions may feel like understanding, they're often traps that lead to misunderstanding, defensiveness, and pain. Shelley highlighted that people frequently make assumptions because they're afraid of conflict or of the truth itself. But true intimacy, she said, is born from courageous questions. "Ask," she urged us, "don't suffer in silence." This agreement, more than any other, is about interrupting the mind's need to be right and replacing it with curiosity and openness. It invites us to be brave enough to ask, clear enough to speak, and humble enough to revise what we think we know.

### Fourth agreement: Always do your best

This one hit closer to home than I expected. As a near-hardwired overachiever, I assumed I had this one covered. But I came to see that your best is fluid. It changes depending on your energy, your health, your emotional state. And doing your best does not mean driving yourself to the ground or always saying yes. As a woman, I've seen how easy it is to equate doing your best with over-serving others, even to the point of self-erasure. But the truth is, your best isn't about sacrifice. It's about showing up with care, presence, and honesty, and knowing when enough is enough. To do your best, you must know yourself and respond with understanding, not judgement.

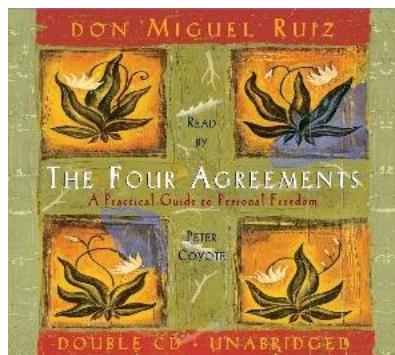
This agreement also wove beautifully back to the first. Being impeccable with your word includes how you speak to yourself. If you falter, speak to yourself with compassion. If you push too hard, forgive yourself. And if you find yourself in a state of ease and joy while using your gifts fully, you've tapped into the quiet intelligence of your spirit. In Taoist philosophy, the state is called *wu-wei*, effortless action, or flowing in harmony with life. Think of Michael Jordan on the basketball court, in the flow. When you feel that easy current carrying you forwards, you're doing your best, not with strain, but with grace.

*The Four Agreements* are deceptively simple. They ask for self-awareness, emotional honesty, and a refusal to let fear run the show. It offers the wisdom to find the path towards greater peace. I left Shelley's class with a clearer voice, a stronger backbone, and a deeper sense of self-trust. And for that, I am deeply grateful. Living the four agreements often means standing in quiet conviction, balancing reason with heart, and walking with integrity.

### More Praise for *Living the Four Agreements*

I have to admit that when I started to read *The Four Agreements*, I wasn't sure this was for me. But Shelley Tatelbaum's warm and kind presentation converted me right away. She brought Miguel Ruiz's wisdom to life. I am already incorporating many of the practices in my life and I am grateful to Shelley for all that I learned in four short weeks.

--Cathy Bokor



**Shelley and Ron Tatelbaum** presented a fabulous class. They are natural teachers, well organized, engaging, present, and personable. I enjoyed the readings and class discussions. This was my best class of the Fall Semester. --Elizabeth Hoffman



## Spotlight on: Shelley Tatelbaum & Ron Tatelbaum

by Cathy Law

**Shelley Tatelbaum** was the ideal instructor to teach *The Four Agreements*. Trained as a psychotherapist, she has also led mindfulness workshops inspired by such masters as Jon Kabat-Zinn.

Shelley met Don Miguel Ruiz in 1999 and subsequently apprenticed with him for many years—attending retreats, joining him on pilgrimages, and eventually becoming certified to teach the Toltec tradition herself.



Photo submitted by Shelley Tatelbaum

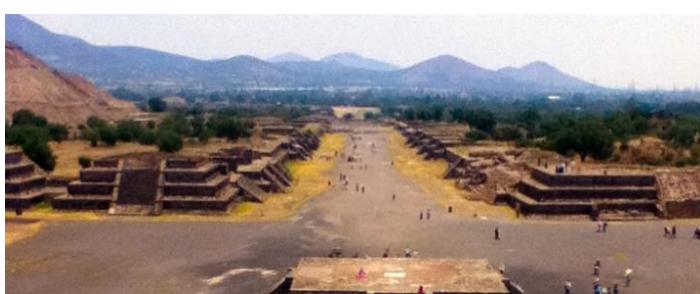
During her work with indigenous healers she was given the spiritual title "*Bridge Maker*," honoring her role in helping others move between the world of the living and the realm of those who have passed. This gift of bridging is at the heart of her primary therapeutic focus: grief work. In fact, Shelley will be offering a spring course at Vassar LLI specifically dedicated to grief and healing.



**Ron Tatelbaum**, Shelley's husband and class assistant, brought personal insight and lively examples of what it's like to follow the four agreements.

Like Don Miguel Ruiz, Ron came from a medical background and his early worldview was shaped by the practical and narrow view of Western science. When he first attended a workshop by Miguel he expected a methodical breakdown of The Four Agreements. Instead he found himself moved by Miquel's authenticity as a trained doctor and spiritual teacher. That meeting opened Ron to an entirely new way of understanding the healing journey, one that embraced intuition, self-knowledge, personal vulnerability and emotional truth.

Inspired, Shelley and Ron joined a 30-person Dreamers Wisdom Group, composed of dedicated seekers from across the Northeast. For four years, the group met one weekend a month to immerse themselves in Toltec teachings through shared reflection and spiritual practice.



They also made annual pilgrimages to Teotihuacan, Mexico, the birthplace of Toltec wisdom and one of the most important ceremonial sites in the Americas. Also called the "City of the Gods," it is home to towering Mesoamerican pyramids. Shelley began leading her own groups to Teotihuacan for many years, helping others learn how to live more authentically.

## Course Synchronicity

by Roger G. Perkins

This semester I selected three classes on topics of interest without realizing that they were all devoted to the same period of time. It was enjoyable to learn about Thoreau's views from Walden Pond, political aspects of the century of peace before WWI and the period of romanticism in the literature, music and art. It was totally by coincidence that this happened.

It was an enjoyable semester from my perspective.

I started in the VCLLI program the first semester in 2018, so it is pleasing to see the program growing.

## New Perspective on Hudson River Paintings

by Mihai Grunfeld



**Dan Peck** is a wonderful lecturer, and going with him through paintings of the Hudson River School, especially Thomas Cole, was a delight to eyes and intellect.

I especially liked the way he compared a specific painted landscape with photos of that place, and the liberties that the artists take in recreating that landscape, sometimes while they are far away from the scene and painted only from memory.

We finished this delightful class by examining some paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe in Vassar's Lehman Loeb Art Center, connecting them to Cole.

## Amusing Musings: Turning Back Time

by Maureen Rant

In a song from the 80s, Cher once wondered if she could “turn back time”. The answer if yes, but only for a short time. I know this because I recently enrolled in *Sex. Drugs, and Rock and Roll*, presented by **Gary Quartararo and Rob Cohen**, in which we delved into our shared history, enhanced by the music associated with past decades.

My favorite decade was the 60s, and, hearing those old songs transported me to a different time, a different place, and even, a different self. One moment I was a senior citizen laboring over Medicare decisions (Is the Advantage Plan really an advantage?), and, the next moment I was a senior in high school on my way to Jones Beach in a 1955 Chevy convertible.... no seat belt, no sun screen, and no worries. It was a great ride, but I knew it was over when I got into my 2020 Toyota and another song from the 50s was speaking to me: “Go Granny, go Granny, go Granny, go.”



## Presenters in Action



**Dana Lucas** enjoying a class of gentle yoga.

Photo by **Yvonne Sewell**

**Jared Flagler**  
explaining beekeeping.

Photo by **Jennifer Henion**



**Brian McMann**  
emphasizing a point about French film.

Photo by **Marian Pompa**



**Andrew Hartman**  
extolling classical music.

Photo by **Marian Pompa**

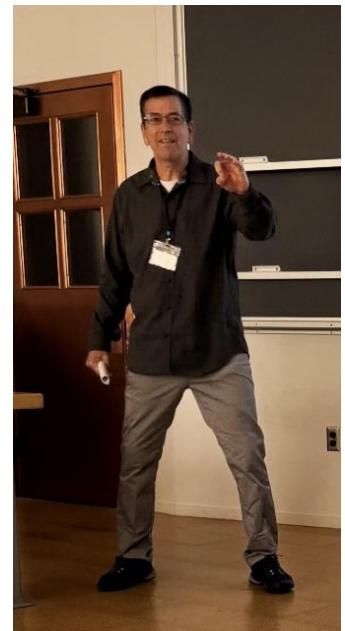


**Nora Quinlan** exclaiming about old books.

Photo by **Jo Hausam**

**Paul Ciminello**  
expounding on the harm of pesticides.

Photo by **Jennifer Henion**



## **Noble Presenters**

Rather than using the word “teacher” or “instructor”, VCLLI prefers the broader term “presenter”: *one who formally gives or bestows something or who brings something before the public*. Our presenters generously impart their knowledge, offer their time, and gift us with their presence. And they volunteer to do this! Why? There is pleasure and satisfaction in giving, in being a vital part of *our noble village* that is designed for adults who love to learn.

## **THANK YOU**

<b>Judith Saunders</b>	<b>Andrew Hartman</b>	<b>Dana Lucas</b>
<b>Linda Cantor</b>	<b>Shannon Butler</b>	<b>Les Muldorf</b>
<b>Norman Abrams</b>	<b>Tom Walker</b>	<b>Skip Weisman</b>
<b>Michael Goodman</b>	<b>Esther Odescalchi</b>	<b>Gala Leganof</b>
<b>Nanette Koch</b>	<b>Ann Constantinople</b>	<b>John McCleary</b>
<b>Gary Quartararo</b>	<b>Paul Stoddard</b>	<b>Carol DiPalo</b>
<b>Sybil DelGaudio</b>	<b>David Roberts</b>	<b>Susan Merson</b>
<b>Nancy LeVine</b>	<b>Arnold Serotsky</b>	<b>Shelly Tatelbaum</b>
<b>Samantha Fulton</b>	<b>Nora Quinlan</b>	<b>Frank Monaco</b>
<b>Chuck Mishaan</b>	<b>Silvana Tropea</b>	<b>Brian Mann</b>
<b>Fred Chromey</b>	<b>Nathan Rosenblum</b>	<b>John McGiff</b>
<b>Lyla Yastion</b>	<b>Jacqueline Goffe-McNish</b>	<b>John Platt</b>
<b>Madeleine Segall-Marx</b>	<b>Marcy Heidish Dolan</b>	<b>Cris Caivano</b>
<b>Denise Morett</b>	<b>Linda Bouchey</b>	<b>Ann Kirschner</b>
<b>Dan Peck</b>	<b>Ronald Patkus</b>	<b>Monica Church</b>
<b>Teresa Quinn</b>	<b>Eve Gendron</b>	<b>Rob Cohen</b>
<b>Serena Marrero</b>	<b>Sudhir Desai</b>	<b>Jared Flagler</b>
<b>Al Vinck</b>	<b>Robert DeMaria, Jr.</b>	<b>Maureen King</b>
<b>Sue McLean</b>	<b>Ryan Dutcher</b>	<b>Ed Rosenberg</b>
<b>Kate Susman</b>	<b>Christine DiMarco</b>	<b>Paul Ciminello</b>

## What Great People We Have at VCLLI!

by Esther Kandó Odescalchi

I taught the course *Wonders of the World*. Because VCLLI does not provide fancy battery-operated pointers to its presenters, I kept going to the screen and used my finger as a humble substitute. However, if the subject happened to be on top of the screen, I jumped like a rabbit or stood on my toes like a ballerina from the Bolshoi ballet.

One morning we were about ready to start the class when **Eileen and Greig Gruszeccki** walked up to my presenter's desk and with big smiles gave me a brand new shiny extendable pointer. How nice that was! Just then a voice chimed in from one of the seats, "Oh, no I can't believe this." As we followed the sound, we saw **Monica Hyman** and **Laurie J. Hedlund** holding a colorful gift bag. "We went all over town looking for a pointer for you, but could not find one. So, we bought this for you." They pulled out a red-handled back scratcher with a long extendible handle. "And one more thing," they continued, "as we searched for a pointer, we saw this pack of playing cards featuring *wonders of the world* and we simply had to buy it for you." And sure enough, the great pyramid of Giza proudly shows its 4500-year-old face on the pack. The class applauded.

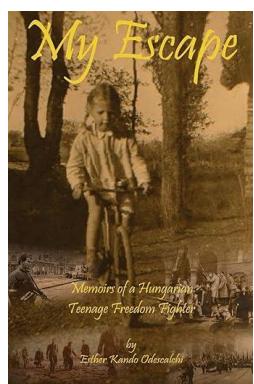
The pointer, the back scratcher, and the playing cards are wonderful and useful things—from now on, I will skip my ballet patterns—but it is the kindness behind them that surely made my day!

Many heartfelt thanks to all four of you for being such warm, wonderful human beings.



**Editor's note:**

**Esther Kandó Odescalchi's** ballet comes naturally. She is a professional ballroom dancer with a Dance Masters' Certificate.



After Esther came to the United States from Hungary, she earned an M.S in Library Science and a Ph.D. in Communications. After a career as a librarian, she joined IBM and worked in executive communications.

She's the author of numerous articles, four books, and a play. One of her books, **My Escape: Memoirs of a Hungarian Teenage Freedom Fighter**, was the basis of the LLI course she taught during the Spring 2025 Semester. She wrote the memoir immediately after her escape and translated it into English fifty years later.

In addition to all those accomplishments, she plays the piano and accordion.

## Frances Burney Unveiled

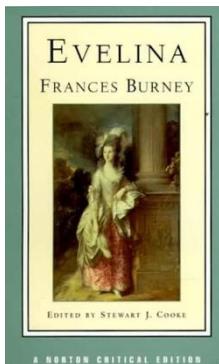
by Nora J. Quinlan

A small but interested group of thirteen VCLLI members attended a presentation on Frances Burney by **Ronald Patkus**, Head of Special Collections and College Historian, Vassar College, and Professor **Robert DeMaria**, of the Vassar College English Department.

Patkus spoke on the history of the acquisition of the Burney collection which was a gift of Doctors Donna Bergan and her late husband Thomas Madden. Bergan is a Vassar alumna of the class of 67.

Professor DeMaria talked about the life of Fanny Burney (1752-1840) who was actually known by several different names, including Frances Burney, Fanny Burney, and Fanny Burney D'Arblay. She was the daughter of a well-known musicologist and was one of almost a dozen children. Fanny grew up in London and was well acquainted with the literary and social scene. As a young woman she served in the court of George the Third as Mistress of the Wardrobe for Queen Charlotte.

Fanny published her first novel, *Evelina*, at the age of 25. She went on to write three more novels. She is also known for her extensive correspondence and her diaries which she kept most of her life, many of which have been published. The presentation ended with questions from the audience, and there were several good questions on her work and life including if she published anonymously or not and why.



The group then moved to the exhibit space on the first floor of the library. There Ron walked us through the exhibit showing us some of the treasures from Vassar's Burney collection including first editions of all of her novels. We then looked at her published diaries, as well as several original manuscript letters to and from Burney, purchased by the Vassar College Libraries. It was a very interesting display and well done. A catalogue of the exhibit is available at the Library.

It was a very worthwhile visit to the library to learn about Burney and I suspect some of us will be reading *Evelina* soon, myself included.

Excerpts from *Evelina: A Young Lady's Entrance into the World*:

“Remember, my dear Evelina, nothing is so delicate as the reputation of a woman: it is, at once, the most beautiful and most brittle of all human things.”

“There is no young creature, my Lord, who so greatly wants, or so earnestly wishes for, the advice and assistance of her friends, as I do: I am new to the world, and unused to acting for myself; my intentions are never willfully blameable, yet I err perpetually!”

## Watching Movies with Sybil DelGaudio: Pure Magic

by Gala Leganof

From the very first minute, Professor **Sybil DelGaudio** threw us headfirst into the world of post-World War II American cinema—and what a ride it was! Her teaching style doesn't just explain films; it makes you see, feel, and think about them in ways you never expected.

Before class, we watched films on streaming platforms—some thrilling, some downright challenging—but Professor DelGaudio made it clear why every single assigned film mattered. Cinema, she showed us, isn't just entertainment; it's a mirror of society, a shaper of values, and a challenge to how we think.

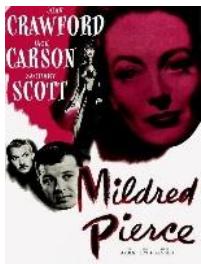
Class discussions were electric. Professor DelGaudio encouraged us to think out loud, debate, and explore different interpretations, turning every conversation into a lively, sometimes exhilarating, journey through ideas. She connected technological change, the rise of television, political shifts, and cultural trends in ways that made history feel alive.

Take *Mildred Pierce* (1945), for example. Even if you'd seen it a dozen times, suddenly you noticed things you never had before. Under her guidance, the film became both compelling and thought-provoking, exploring shifting gender roles and subtle societal commentary. The story of Mildred—a devoted mother who becomes a successful businesswoman—highlighted how Hollywood both reflected and challenged post-war social norms. Discussing it in class, it wasn't just entertainment; it was like holding up a magnifying glass to post-war American society, seeing the complexities of family, ambition, and societal pressures come alive on screen.

And it wasn't all heavy drama. *Detour*, grim and gritty at first glance, became surprisingly eye-opening—and even fun—once we unpacked it in class. Later, films like *Pick-Up on South Street* and *Salt of the Earth* revealed Cold War paranoia and the resilience of blacklisted filmmakers and actors, giving us plenty of fun to discuss, debate, and occasionally gasp over.

*Forty Guns* (1957) was a revelation. Barbara Stanwyck's powerhouse performance as a fiercely independent woman—wielding guns and authority with unflinching confidence—was even more striking when Professor DelGaudio guided us to see her not just as a Western hero but as a trailblazing figure challenging gender norms. “Not bad for a Brooklyn girl,” as Sybil mentioned. Discussing it in class turned every scene into an exploration of women's agency and how Hollywood pushed the boundaries of its era.

As Emerita Professor of Radio, Television, and Film at Hofstra University, Sybil DelGaudio brings unmatched depth, insight, and passion to her teaching. This course didn't just teach film history—it gave us a brand-new lens for seeing American culture. Watching and exploring these movies with Sybil is pure magic.



## Thank You, Sybil

by Celia Serotsky

In the *Post-war American Cinema* class we explored films from 1945 to 1954 under the guidance of instructor **Sybil Del Gaudio**. The class viewed films ranging from “film noir” to those that had social or political themes. Sybil led the class discussion each week informing us of background material regarding the directing, cinematography, and other anecdotal information. And, of course, Sybil entertained us along the way. The class was always engaging and educational.



One of the films we watched was “Detour,” a film noir from 1945 starring Tom Neal and Ann Savage. Many of us were fans of film noir, but this one did not match our expectations. We discussed its merits and its drawbacks, but decided it was not all that well done.

As the weeks went on in the class, Sybil teased us that if we complained about another film, she would make us watch “Detour” again. It became a running class joke. But, in the final class of the semester, we turned the tables on Sybil and presented her with a real detour sign. As you see in the photo on the right, Sybil was hysterical and loved our joke.

Thank you, Sybil, for all that you do to educate us, entertain us, and bring sunshine into our lives in this sometimes dreary world.

Photo by **Yvonne Sewell**



**More Fun...** in Sybil's own words:

*That's me dancing with Norm Abrams.... Couldn't resist dancing since Doris Day was singing the song "Again," with the Mellowtones, on my Power Point presentation during the week we discussed Pick-up on South Street. I had pre-arranged (and rehearsed it) with Norm, but it was a surprise to the class.*

Photo by **Sarah Kennedy**



Sybil also received a medal: **Teacher of the Decade**

Photo submitted by **Diana Salsberg**, who stands to the right of Sybil.



## **Gentle Walks in the Hudson Valley: Two Reviews**

### **Physically and Socially Invigorating** by Nora J. Quinlan

*Gentle Walks in the Hudson Valley* is a very popular class. Led by presenters **Teresa Quinn, Maureen King, and Sue MacLean**, this semester's class met at four locations in both Ulster and Dutchess Counties.

The first walk was at Samuel Morse's property, **Locust Grove**, in Poughkeepsie. The class that day also included a tour of the house led by Locust Grove docents. The house sits on a bluff overlooking the Hudson River. Morse renovated the original house on the site in the Italianate style with a tower where he and his large family spent their summers from 1852 until his death in 1872. After his death the house was sold and was purchased by the Youngs, a local family who made it their own home. The house tour took longer than expected, so the walk around the property was shortened.



Our second meeting was at **Poets' Walk Park** in northern Dutchess County near Red Hook. This property is owned by Scenic Hudson. The park was originally developed by the local community in the late nineteenth century and was designed to be an area for walking that had staged natural landscaped "rooms". As you progress through the property, you have different views of the Hudson River, the Kingston Rhinecliff Bridge, and the Catskill Mountains. Despite it being a very windy day we enjoyed the walk.

The third walk was at **Minnewaska State Park Preserve** near Kerhonkson in Ulster County. We had the treat of a nature walk led by Laura Conner, the Environmental Educator at Minnewaska. She took the group to Patterson's Pellet Rock where we had wonderful views to the southwest. We then walked along the carriage trails to another scenic vista, Kempton Ledge, with views to the southeast including Storm King and the Hudson Highlands.



Our fourth walk was originally scheduled for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt House property in Hyde Park, which is a National Historic Park. But this walk was canceled because of the Federal government shutdown. Instead, a substitute walk was scheduled at **Franny Reese State Park** in Highland. We had a beautiful but chilly day. We ended the walk at the dramatic overlook right above the west entrance to the Mid-Hudson River Bridge.

(Continued on next page.)

I found this class to be good for me both physically and socially. I got to take 3-4 mile walks and it gave me an opportunity to talk to many different people. I will admit I was usually the last one at the back of the walk, but there was always one person behind me, doing the “sweep”, which made me feel safe. I look forward to taking this class again and being the class manager once more!

### ***Enriching, Restorative, Inspiring*** by Gala Leganof

The course *Gentle Walks in the Hudson Valley* was nothing short of spectacular—a beautifully organized and deeply enriching experience that far exceeded the catalog description. What was described as a series of easy-to-moderate walks quickly revealed itself to be something much more: a blend of natural beauty, the rich history of the Hudson Valley region, and a nonstop learning journey about the people and events connected to these landscapes—such as Samuel F. B. Morse and his home at Locust Grove, or Franny Reese and her determined efforts to preserve the beauty of our region. All of this was wrapped in a sense of community that felt both restorative and inspiring.



Each hike—Locust Grove, Poet’s Walk, Minnewaska State Park, and Franny Reese State Park—offered its own distinctive charm. But what made these outings truly exceptional were the presenters: **Teresa Quinn, Maureen King, and Sue MacLean**. Their warmth, preparation, and genuine passion elevated every step along the trail. They didn’t just guide us through the Hudson Valley—they invited us to fully *experience* it.



The educational elements were thoughtfully woven into each walk, adding depth without interrupting the natural rhythm of being outdoors. Whether we were learning about local history, ecological features, or the stories behind the parks themselves, each outing offered delightful layers of discovery.

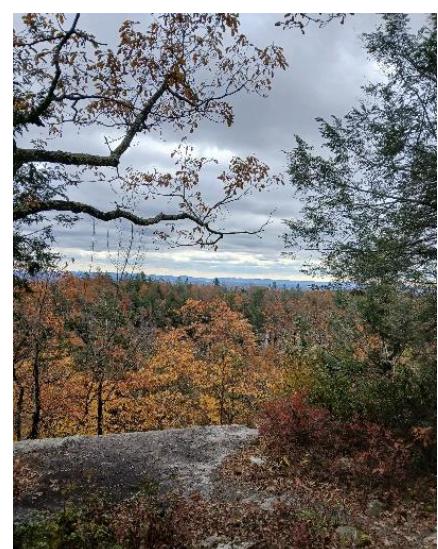
Equally meaningful was the sense of community the presenters fostered. Teresa, Maureen, and Sue created a welcoming, comfortable atmosphere where conversation flowed easily and participants connected with one another as naturally as with the landscape around us.

This course delivered far more than advertised: it offered joy, curiosity, camaraderie, and a renewed appreciation for the unique beauty of the Hudson Valley. For anyone who loves nature—or simply wants to explore it in good company while learning about the region’s history—this is an experience to savor. If you haven’t taken these walks yet,



explore them on your own sometime. They are truly special. But taking them with this team? That is something unforgettable.

Photos by  
**Nora Quinlan &  
Gala Lagerof**



## Class Managers: Bridges in Our Village

**Class Managers** serve as bridges between students and presenters. Via email they pass on reminders and information about upcoming classes, take attendance, and make announcements. They keep us connected.

### THANK YOU!

*Madeline Cole*

*MaryAnn Williams*

*Sarah Rothman*

*Nadine Revheim*

*Roger Perkins*

*Anne Saylor*

*Valerie Carlisle*

*John Dux*

*Joette Kane*

*Linda Rizzotto*

*Skip Weisman*

*Ron Tatelbaum*

*Jayesh Modi*

*Marian Pompa*

*Roseann Ashby*

*Lucy Johnson*

*Judy Elkin*

*Maribeth King*

*Teresa Quinn*

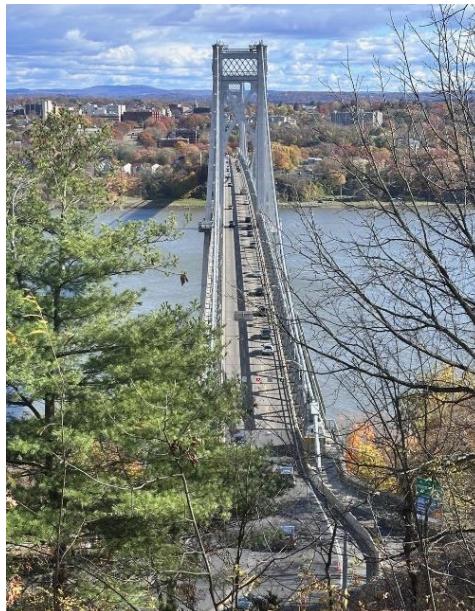


Photo by **Gala Lagerof**

*Cary Philips Auerbach*

*Sarah Kennedy*

*Nancy Miller*

*Susan Fink*

*Betsy Kopstein*

*Phillipa Goodman*

*Jennifer Henion*

*Bill Davies*

*Rachel Reisman*

*Christopher Baltus*

*Muriel Horowitz*

*Christopher Parks*

*Mary Hannah*

*David Bloom*

*Ruth Kava*

*Regina Klein*

*Paul Stoddard*

*Maureen King*

*Nora Quinlan*



## Spotlight on: Chris Parks

**Editor's Note:** Chris was the class manager for the course *The History of the Book*. His weekly emails to class members contained more than the basic info. He enhanced them by including interesting facts about Vassar College that he wanted to share with us. His enthusiasm prompted me to ask him to write a piece about himself for the newsletter. As you will read, instead of focusing on himself, he chose to honor the college and VCLLI.

### Retiree Embracing Lifelong Learning

by Chris Parks

Immediately upon my retiring in 2018, my neighbor, **Mihai Grunfeld**, hustled me to join Vassar LLI. I hurriedly joined Vassar LLI along with Marist CLS (Continuing Lifetime Studies.) On the first day at Vassar, Lucy Johnson demonstrated arrowhead “knapping” and I was “hooked.”



Foremost I want to thank Vassar College for hosting and providing facilities to LLL at a nominal cost, for decades of offering extraordinary free Skinner Hall music concerts and Vassar summer plays, and for enabling my toddler daughter to view a comet decades ago using the Vassar Telescope! Vassar has treasures, including the astonishing Florence (Ghiberti) Gates of Paradise Replica, the Lady Cornaro Window celebrating the first woman to receive a doctorate in 1678, and an amazing rare book collection. Ron Patkus, Director of Special Collections, showed some of these books to our *History of the Book* class, taught by **Nora Quinlan**.

As class manager for *History of the Book*, I supplemented my weekly reminders with notable Vassar information. I highlighted some of Vassar’s famous alum, including 19<sup>th</sup> century Vassar astronomer Maria Mitchell and Kate Dooley (Vassar Physics graduate, 2006), now Professor at the Gravitational Wave Institute at Cardiff University, Wales.

I also want to celebrate presenters. **Tom Walker**, who will be “retiring”, taught eleven spectacular history courses, a series covering China, Russia, and the “Century of Peace” to lively, engaged audiences. **Chuck Mishaan** was able to weave Mozart or Verdi profoundly with the Enlightenment. Now, reaching forward to the subject of authoritarianism, *Escape: Europe and the Middle East, 1918-1948*, presented by **Eve Gendron** and *Sala’s Gift*, a single-session class presented by **Ann Kirschner**, show how the human spirit can rise. I learned about AI from **Jean-Claude Fouere** and about Ukraine from **Gala Leganof**. From **Paul Ciminello** and **Melissa Everett**, I learned about plastics, pesticides, and renewable energy.

As you can see, being part of Vassar LLI and, more generally, Vassar College, has been an enlarging experience.

Shortly after joining LLI, I presented my own lectures at Vassar and Marist on *Humanity’s Future and Ethical Vision with Math at its Center*. I am concerned with a number of overlapping issues: population growth, climate change, and technology. We live during one of the largest transitions in human history. The best we can hope for in 40 years is to have been working on the right problems!

## Fiction Feature: Excerpt from the Screenplay *It Takes a Village*

by Roberta M Roy

When Jo Hausam, the editor of this magazine, shared with me that this season's theme would be "It Takes a Village," it called to mind my movie feature script by the same name. *It Takes a Village* addresses how people must work together to survive a nuclear meltdown. It is based on my novel, *Jolt: a rural noir*, written not only to entertain, but to inform people how to survive a nuclear power plant meltdown. There are ninety atomic fission power plants in the United States, among which there have been eight meltdowns. Thirty percent of the American population lives within fifty miles of such a plant,

In the scene below people scramble to seek safety after a power plant meltdown. A young woman, Natalie, calling from her office in the town of Bain, talks on the phone with her lover Thaw.

The meltdown has occurred some hundred miles south of Bain. Thaw lives in a mountain village in the town of Lochlee, a hundred miles north of Bain. It's anticipated that both Bain and Lochlee will be overrun by people fleeing the fallout.

The scene is about Natalie and Thaw making plans for Natalie, her sister, and her sister's daughter to flee from Bain to stay with Thaw. Natalie parents, less concerned about fallout, are staying at Natalie's place in Bain. Of importance in this scene is recognition of the need for radioactive iodine to be available to prevent thyroid cancer, which is likely when people are exposed to radiation fallout.

Meanwhile, behind the scenes, Thaw and his friend Lem are organizing their small mountain town to decontaminate, feed, house, and provide medical treatment for those fleeing the nuclear fallout radiation.

NATALIE: My family lives just north of Ariana. About 40 miles from the meltdown.  
They're heading to Bain.

I told them to take the secondary roads as the main ones are sure to be jammed.  
I'm meeting them at the intersection of Six and Three-N.

THAW: And then they'll follow you?

NATALIE: No. They are coming to Bain for "just a little while." I don't think they really get it.

THAW: No.

NATALIE: At any rate, they'll be better off in Bain than Ariana. They'll have their car and can stay here.

THAW: And your sister?

(Continued on next page.)

NATALIE: I want to bring them up with me. My sister is afraid of the nuclear fallout for her daughter.

THAW: So you won't be alone. (sigh of relief)  
But with only three in the car, you may be stopped.  
If you have to pick up a fourth, do it.

NATALIE: Where will we sleep?

THAW: We can use my air mattress and a second one that's Lem's.

NATALIE: Oh, the air mattresses'll be fine. Is there anything I can do while I wait?

THAW: Yeah. Go shopping. Fill up the cart with staples. Anything medical.  
See if you can find Potassium iodide.

NATALIE: Potassium iodide?

THAW: Yes. K-I. It prevents the thyroid from taking up radioactive iodine.  
And get as much as you can. It comes in two-week supplies.  
We need one pack for every one of us.

NATALIE: I'll have to see what's open. What they have. If I can, I'll pick up some for Lem, too.

THAW: Look, Nat, don't try to do too much. Just do what you can. And come as soon as possible.

NATALIE: I will, Thaw.

THAW: Hopefully, the wind will remain calm and blow from the west.  
That would give you a couple of hours.

(They both pause to collect themselves.)

THAW: Natalie, I love you. With all my heart.

(A train whistle sounds in the distance.)

NATALIE: I love you, too.

**Roberta M Roy (Robin)** has coached *Writing Fiction with Other Writers* and serves on the VCLLI Curriculum Committee.

*It Takes a Village* was selected as the 2025 Official Selection of the New York True Venture Film Festival. Also, it was awarded Best Screenplay at the 2024 Atlantis Awards and the Best Feature Script at the Robinson Film Awards International.



## Class Creates Unique Torn-Paper Collages

Article and photos by **Carole Wolf**

**Monica Church** (photo on left) totally engaged our class in creating many interesting and colorful paper collages in the studios at The Art Effect.

Each piece was unique and different in style, size, texture, and technique.



It was amazing to see how many different ways torn paper was used to create so many powerful and dynamic images.



Everyone was totally involved in the creative process and found great joy and pride in sharing their work.

Thanks Monica for a great course!!!



This photo by **Terry Quinn**.)

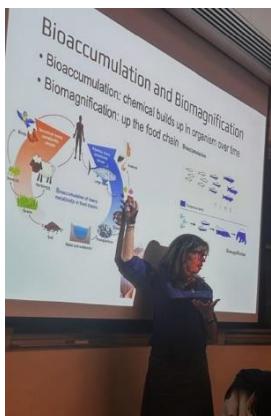




## Presenter's Perspective: Kate Susman

This was the first time I had the opportunity to teach a course with LLI, thanks to the kind invitation from **Paul Ciminello**, to collaborate on *Invisible Poisons*. Paul is a true expert and excellent teacher. It was a great pleasure to work with him.

We both feel strongly that being informed about the harmful effects of dangerous chemicals like pesticides on our health and that of the wildlife around us is crucial to being able to change our practices for a safer and healthier world.



It is exhilarating to be in a classroom with such engaged and thoughtful students! I loved it and hope to be fortunate enough to offer another course soon.

### Student Comments:

*Excellent class. Greatly informative!*

*Excited about what they will teach next!*

*It was scary but I learned so much!*



Comments and photos submitted by Class Manager **Susan Fink**.



## VCLLI's Luminous Learning Spaces

Photos by  
**Jennifer Henion**



## Walden: Wasps and Walnuts

by Diane O'Leary

By chance or by my subconscious design, Henry David Thoreau made his way into the courses I selected for the fall 2025 semester. Beyond the obvious, (*Re*)-*Reading Walden*" and drawing trees outside of Blodgett to unleash *Our Creative Nature*, it was pleasing to be reminded of Thoreau as we each strived to become *The Mindful Senior*. His wisdom appeared again when we looked back on *The Fascinating...’ Fifties*.

Coming of age in the 1960s was culture shock for many of us. Just four weeks into my first semester of college, I found myself in a packed campus chapel, all holding hands and belting out "We Shall Overcome" in solidarity with James Meredith's march. With the Vietnam War eventually looming over us all, those years were witness to such horrors as the assassination of our President, Bloody Sunday at Selma, and George Wallace's defiant stand against desegregation.

Unsettled, many of us sought new meaning, questioning our childhood beliefs, such as they were. In my second year, my roommate, a "psych" major, initially fully engaged with the lab rats, and after a brief attachment to Benjamin Franklin, made a hard landing on The Book of Mormon. Her dedication lasted until those two "cute" Mormon missionary boys she'd meet with regularly finally closed the sale and moved on. An English major, I glided to a softer landing on Emerson and Thoreau, who helped unleash me from the obsessiveness of a strict religious upbringing. The concept of experiencing God in nature was liberating. Surely a walk in the woods beat standing up in church pledging to avoid films banned by the Legion of Decency, an impairment to the awakenings afforded by a liberal education.

I fancied myself a Transcendentalist of sorts. So, in years later, we often took our children for walks in the woods on Sunday mornings. We practiced organic gardening, composted and preserved. I studied, fed and even made paintings of birds. Ever captivated by the sea, I discovered Cape Cod, the beauty of its sunrises and sunsets and those sparkling, delightful kettle ponds! Wellfleet became my Walden. Judith Saunders promised eight weeks at Walden Pond. It was an opportunity to renew my relationship with Thoreau, a welcome tonic for yet another tumultuous time.

Re-reading an iconic work in depth after sixty years is more than a reawakening, it's a major fill-in-the-blanks. At age twenty we were lucky to capture the gist of our assigned writings. I certainly didn't recall Thoreau's wasps, mentioned in one short paragraph I likely skimmed over. In his chapter devoted to nature surviving the cold winter, titled "House-Warming", Thoreau described how thousands of wasps spent the winter in his lodge, settling on and in windows and walls, and how they weren't much bother, so he didn't mind their presence. He even felt flattered that they chose his home.

Not long after classes ended, I began to ready my home for winter. Attempting to live in the moment deliberately, I approached my storage shed lugging two garden hoses. Never in the twenty years since I had the shed built did I notice such a sight. Walnuts! In various stages of decay, walnuts were lined up on beams, on shelves, in corners, submerged in bags of potting soil, even buried in a pot under about six inches of hardware, mostly nails! My footsteps caused some to roll across the floor and some to drop from a beam, bouncing like spilled marbles! I paused. I was practicing mindfulness after all. Had this happened before and I didn't take notice? I couldn't help but chuckle. I remembered the wasps.

(Continued on next page.)

My adult children have been suggesting that I need to start cleaning out, particularly those prime offenders, the basement, garage, and shed. From their perspective, I admit that subtlety hasn't worked. Recently, my son, allegedly in jest, bought me a book titled, "Nobody Wants Your Sh\*t". At a silent auction, my daughter bid on and won a dumpster she doesn't really need for herself, yet to be employed.

So, there I was in my shed sixty years after reading Walden, momentarily pondering. "What should I do? I should clean this out. But don't the squirrels deserve their stash to survive the winter?" Well... what did I do? The path to the shed would soon be covered in snow. For now, only the squirrels know.

Kudos and with gratitude to **Judith, Carol & Christina, Lyla, Chuck, Gary & Rob.**

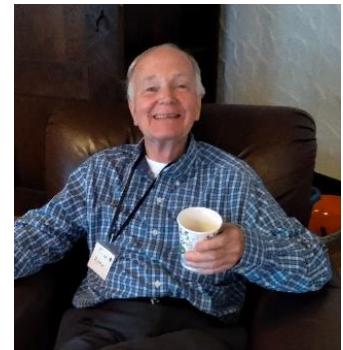
## The Hospitality Room: The Village Hub for Grub & Gabbing

**Tim Ryan** has been Chair of the Hospitality Committee for three years. His quiet, conscientious efficiency keeps the coffee brewing. He's one of the invisible mainsprings of our village.

Last semester Tim took a small poll to see if everyone liked the coffee.

Here are some responses:

*The coffee's fine for me and I've not heard of any complaints.*



*I think you do a fantastic job all around!! Thank you!!*

*The coffee is fine. You're doing a great job!*

*Thank you for keeping the Hospitality Room running. I know how much our members appreciate the space.*

Members use this space to snack and chat between classes.

Every Friday morning Tim and his volunteers (10 during this past Fall) arrive early, make the coffee, and set out the snacks.

At 3 pm they clean up.

**THANK YOU** for all you do!



Students taking a break in the Hospitality Room.



## Listening To the Enemy: An Art Project

by Tish Fitzpatrick

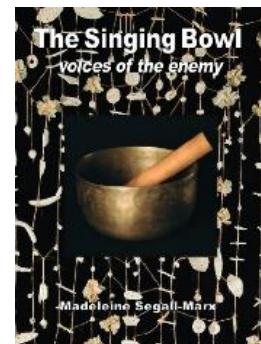
I registered for this 4-week course with few expectations beyond my curiosity about its title and description and my hopes for a thought provoking and inspiring experience of an artist's creative process. The course's premise captured my attention due to its relevance, given the current distressing political divide in the U.S. and in the larger world.

The course was a presentation of an art project that was completed by our presenter, **Madeleine Segall-Marx**, over a period of more than ten years. It rested on her belief that if people truly listened to those they identified as their "enemies," they would be more likely to achieve an understanding of and appreciation for their different beliefs and ideologies. By listening, the likelihood of conflict or war might be diminished.

In our class, Madeleine presented excerpts from the writings she collected from people in 25 different countries who told of their experiences while living in their respective conflict-ridden or war-torn country. She showed us the awe-inspiring works of art she created to accompany each of the authors' writings. Her large scale artistic creations consist of sculptures, paintings, and mixed media works. Her pieces depict her incredibly imaginative process in the artistic renderings of each author's written experience.

Madeleine explained to the class that she firmly believes that food has always served as a universal "unifier" among people. Accompanying each art work and the author's account, Madeleine also included a recipe of a traditional dish from each country. In many of her pieces she incorporated visual representations of the ingredients and, in some of her works, some of the actual foods themselves. Madeleine published a book, *The Singing Bowl: voices of the enemy*, that documents her extraordinary project. It contains each of the authors' complete written account of their experience of conflict, beautiful photos of the accompanying works of art, and each of the unique recipes.

In our last class, we had the good fortune to visit Madeleine's exhibition space at a vintage two-story barn in Hyde Park which houses each of the art works for this incredible project. To view them in real life, to see their sheer size, their exquisite detail, and the profound message they impart was indeed the grand finale to a wonderful class.



This was truly a course that far surpassed my wishes for a thought provoking and inspiring experience. It was Madeleine's very powerful presentation that drove home in so many ways that simple premise...that we can learn so much from others and cross the divide of differences and conflicts if we just listen.



### Presenter Perspective: Nora J. Quinlan



*The History of the Book* class was a very emotional course for me to teach. I was very surprised how hard it was for me to do, not because I didn't know the subject nor because I hadn't taught it in 30 years. It was because of all the memories that came flooding back. Especially the people. People who had given me help or advice, had mentored me and taught me. People who had worked with me or who had become friends over a shared passion for the book.

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So many memories, faces, and voices came flooding back that it was overwhelming for me at times as many of them are no longer here. It became very hard to deal with my ghosts though I did love teaching the class.

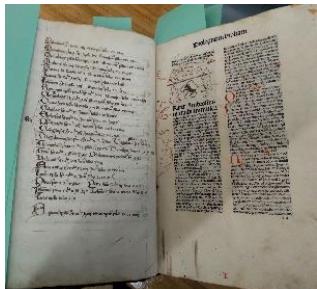
But, at the same time, teaching the class reminded me how much I love the subject and that I could not hide nor forget my own passion and knowledge about books—their beauty, value, and history, and all the people who shared that with me. And so I tried to share that with the class and I hope that I did.

\*\*\*

## ***The History of the Book: Comprehensive and Captivating***

**by Jo Hausam**

As a former library specialist and book-lover, I thought I knew a lot about the history of books. But Nora Quinlan's class, which scanned centuries, added much, much more to my knowledge. She definitely fulfilled her goal of revealing the *beauty, value, and history* of the book.



She began each session showing a panel from the mural in the lobby of the Poughkeepsie Journal building in Poughkeepsie depicting the history of printing. I visited the site and the mural is definitely worth seeing.



Nora showed us old manuscripts from her own collection. And we never knew what object she would pull out of her bag to pass around and let us touch, items such as papyrus, parchment, a scroll, a stylus, etching tools, and lead letters. Each week, at home, we could view a video related to our topic, like paper-making or the construction of an old printing press.



One of the classes was held in the Reading Room at the Vassar College Library (See photo below.) Ron Patkus, Special Collections Librarian, displayed and spoke about some of the rare and valuable items in the collection, including a cuneiform tablet and a page from one of the Gutenberg Bibles! This course was beyond my expectations.



(Editor's note: Apologies to Vivien Kaul on the far right whose image was cut off.)

## Drawing On Our Creative Nature: Time to Pause, Play, & Create

Article by **Muriel Horowitz**  
Photos by **Carol DiPalo**

What a delightful class! Instructors **Carol DiPalo** and **Christina DiMarco** created a supportive outdoor community of artists during this 4-week exploratory drawing class.

As we sat in a loose circle, we began each class with a grounding exercise that brought us into the present surrounded by the natural beauty of the campus. Each week, we explored a variety of drawing materials and techniques.



In the warm embrace of our teachers, each participant felt welcomed, valued, and appreciated for her unique style and creative attempts.



It was wonderful to take time to pause, to play, and to create, encouraged by our instructors and each other.



## Abracadabra! Let's talk magic!

by Adeline Anderson and Janet Burati



Our class, *Magic for Seniors*, with **Frank Monaco** and **Ryan Dutcher**, was, let's just say it, magical!

From card tricks (*force a card*) to coin tricks (*now you see it, now you don't*) to rope tricks (*is it long or is it short?*), we were well prepared to face the toughest audience—our grandchildren.

Frank and Ryan proved to be not only great illusionists but also great teachers. We were captivated by their skill as they demonstrated the art of illusion and by their patience, warmth and sense of humor, as we tried to mimic and master what they taught us.

And if you think for a moment that we can tell you how these tricks are done—well, we can't. We are have taken the magicians' oath not to divulge the mystery behind our magic.

And so for our first VCLLI experience let's just say it—it was magical!

## More Fantastic Magic

article and photo (below) by Mihai Grunfeld

**Sudhir Desai's** *Lunch then Learn Magic Show for Seniors* was clearly not only for seniors. It was for everybody. He is a great magician and performer, with lots of humorous commentaries while he performs.



He cut somebody in half, made another student disappear, pulled a pig out of a hat, and I don't even dare mention what else he did in front of an amazed class. He is fantastic.

He should clearly bring his wife Gita to help, next time. I saw the two work a show together and it was even more memorable. He's the best and should come back next semester.



## Lunch then Learn: Learning from Each Other

by Sandy Corwin

Most of the seats in room 131 of Kenyon were filled. Many of us had gulped down something for lunch and were enjoying a few minutes socializing with the folks around us as we waited for the *Lunch then Learn* session about the atomic age to begin. We waited and waited and waited....

It became clear that the speaker was not going to show up. Some of us were still chatting, others were quietly figuring out what to do when Mihai Grunfield, who was one of the attendees, got our attention and suggested that, since we were all here for a course entitled *The Birth of the Atomic Age and Its Consequences*, we go around and take a minute or so to tell what interested us about this topic.

This impromptu sharing was so rich and varied! Many of us recalled our early school drills of Duck and Cover. We heard about a bit of the physics and history of the experimentation with atomic reactions. There were expressions of fear about the ability of leaders to make judgements concerning the use of nuclear weapons. Can nuclear power be safely used for energy? What happens to nuclear waste material? Some of us reflected on the nuclear meltdowns of the past. Those of us who had connections to people who had a role in the development of nuclear energy shared the concerns and comments of those workers who had been involved.

So, although what happened in that classroom was not what I had expected, thanks to Mihai's skillful teacher's instincts and the willing participation of all of us, I walked out of that class room feeling grateful that I am a part of a group of thoughtful, articulate people who think about and care deeply about the world we share.

## *The Queen City Class*

Photo by Sarah Kennedy

*The Queen City: A Brief History of Poughkeepsie* was presented by **Shannon Butler**, Historian for the Poughkeepsie Public Library District. Participants happily posed for the photo.





*On-Campus  
Comings  
&  
Goings*



Photos below by **Sarah Kennedy**; others by **Jo Hausam**



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**THANK YOU** to the many photographers  
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