

Lifelong Learning Institute

SPRING 2023 *Newsletter*



Northern Illinois University

LLI@niu.edu

Musings...

Carol Zar

Steering Committee Chair

As I look out my window, everything is snow covered. But I hope that, when you read this, spring will be on its way. Just as seasons change, the leadership of LLI needs to change. Many of us on the Steering Committee have been serving for a long time. We would like to step down over the next year or two and turn over the reins to new folks. A step in that direction is the recent addition of Maureen Perchiazzi to the Steering Committee as a member-at-large.

LLI has always functioned as a volunteer-led group. Now is the time for you to volunteer! Don't wait to be asked; tell us how you would like to help.

These are the members of the Steering Committee and the jobs they currently do. Contact any one of them to find out more and how you could get involved on a committee. They'd love to hear from you.

Elizabeth Bass heads the Notables Committee, which is responsible for recruiting and scheduling our Notable speakers. Wearing a different hat, she also edits our twice-a-year newsletter.

Dan Dillman and **Joanne Dillman** co-chair our Curriculum Committee. This is the group that recruits conveners, schedules classes, and makes sure that all of us have interesting classes to choose from. Without a strong curriculum, LLI cannot exist.

Linda Fulton chairs our Outreach Committee. These are the folks who get the word out about LLI, welcome new members, and provide guides to the Holmes Student Center at the beginning of each term.

Bob Higerson, our Finance Chair, watches how our money is being spent. This is an oversight role as our NIU liaison has primary responsibility for finances.

Judy Olsen chairs the Soiree Committee. This group plans our annual fundraising event and recently has added arranging other social activities, such as our fall luncheon, to our calendar.

Pat Vary is our Cultural Affairs chair. She compiles listings of events at NIU and the surrounding area that may be of interest to our members. This gets sent to all LLI members before each term.

Judy Wright and **Maureen Perchiazzi** are our members-at-large. Judy has been serving in this capacity for a number of years, while Maureen is just joining the committee. Their role is to help us keep our eyes on the big picture so that LLI can provide the kind of programming members want.

Finally, I've been serving as Steering Committee chair, with a brief respite when Jerry Smith took over that role for two years, for over ten years. The Steering Committee sets policy for LLI, sets the calendar and registration fees, and deals with the myriad details that go into running a successful program. As chair, I chair our three meetings each year and serve as the liaison with the folks at NIU who provide us with administrative support.

So, there you have it. Give me a call at 815-758-1905 or send me an email at czar@niu.edu and let me know how you want to help. I look forward to hearing from you.

— Carol

LLI'S RENAISSANCE MAN

LLI interviews typically feature someone who's a new convener or is about to present a new topic. With Chris Nissen, we are getting a bit of both. His first appearance, a Notables talk, was back in 2015. Five years later he teased us again with a Notables talk on the history of Venice on Zoom during the pandemic. Then, this fall and winter, he had LLI members clamoring for more after he caught classes on Dante, Boccaccio, and other pre-Renaissance Italians. So this spring Chris is transporting us to the Italian Renaissance...and it promises to be quite a journey.

A native Californian, Chris earned all three of his degrees from the University of California-Berkeley. As a newly minted Ph.D., he came directly to NIU, where he began a career of more than thirty years in the Department of World Languages and Cultures. Though he retired in 2019 as a professor of Italian, his knowledge of European history and his language facility (Italian, French, and Latin) continue to make him a valuable resource in covering some difficult-to-staff departmental needs. Still, he's found time to write several novels, to continue his research, and now to teach for LLI.

Chris credits a unique childhood for his broad world view and his attitude about learning. Chris's parents were both artists (his father a sculptor and art teacher) who were committed to exposing Chris and his older brother to a full range of life experiences. This included a year-long tour of Europe when his father took a sabbatical at half-salary. Far from the well-heeled American tourists that locals were used to seeing, the Nissen family traveled so economically that Chris says the Italians could never quite figure them out.

He is still a bit amazed at how his family managed to pull off this great adventure on a shoestring budget, although one clue might be the frequent mention in his brother's diary about how often his mother cooked spaghetti for dinner. Among his other adventures was a well-supervised visit to the Haight-Ashbury District of San Francisco during 1967's Summer of Love, an eye-opening experience for a boy not yet in his teens.



Chris describes his teaching style as “spontaneous.” He uses lots of images, projected on a screen, as he moves about the room in animated lecture mode. He admits that seeing a particular graphic or photo often triggers a thought or memory which leads him to digress. The result: additional information, new insights, and a thoroughly entertaining journey as he threads his way back to the subject at hand. In March, Chris will convene *The Civilization of the Italian Renaissance*.

If you're wondering what kind of experience to expect, take time to look at the on-line evaluations from some of his former NIU students. There you'll find such comments as “awesome lectures” and “Nissen's the best teacher I've ever had,” along with the most ringing endorsement of all – a 100 per cent “would-take-again” assessment for his classes.

Chris is very much looking forward to his next LLI engagement. He loves the interest that older students show in learning new things and appreciates the insight that maturity brings to discussion. He is a presenter whose curiosity is exceeded only by his enthusiasm. So sign up soon – and fasten your seat belts, because all signs point to a memorable experience.

— Brad Pietens

Meet Our Grad Assistant



Coming to NIU to earn an M.S.Ed. in Instructional Technology meant moving south for Aniqah Tahsin, our LLI grad assistant and tech guru, since she grew up in Toronto and earned her undergraduate degree from Ontario Tech University in Oshawa.

working in the cancer clinic, she was a floater, working everywhere from the hospitality desk to the surgical suite to the fracture clinic.

Aniqah will finish her NIU course work this semester and then complete her UX (user experience) certification this summer. She'll be job hunting and says that she'd love to work at NIU should there be an opportunity. Her goal is to work in training or as a UX designer, creating the products trainers use. LLI conveners can attest to not only her skills in training but also the charm, tact, and good humor with which she has helped us.

LLI is not Aniqah's first time working with retirees. During her undergrad years, she worked as a hospital volunteer, and many of her fellow workers, as well as supervisors, were older adults. After her first year there

Inflation, Education, Immigration – It Must Be Notables!

Over the years, Notables talks have provided many of us with not only dinner table conversations but also a deeper understanding of our world. This spring, you'll hear about topics as timely as inflation and intra-party politics and as close-to-home as aspects of pain management. You'll also learn about how education

and educating teachers has changed over the past 125 years, immigration, and more. So, whether or not you are enrolled this term, join us any Wednesday, from 1 to 2:30 p.m. (see the weekly email for a blurb on that week's topic) and feel free to bring guests.

COVID Protocols

LLI will again be in-person for our spring term. LLI uses NIU mask and other COVID-19 policies as bases for our policies, with appropriate adaptations. You can read the full policy at <https://www.niu.edu/protecting-the-pack/prevention-testing/masks.shtml>.

As in the fall, LLI's policy, as of mid-February, is that masks are recommended but not required.

BLOOMING THIS SPRING at LLI – March 14 to May 9

All study groups 4 weeks, unless noted.

A Whole Lot of Shakin’ Going on...and It’s Our Fault

Linda Fulton

Hear about Midwestern geology and the New Madrid Fault.

Indelible: A Study of Photographs We Won’t let Fade Away: Part 3 – Images from the ‘80s & ‘90s

Joe Gastiger

Study the who, what, and why of photos documenting historical events.

Notables (8 weeks)

LLI Notables Committee

Hear talks by experts, primarily NIU faculty, with time for questions.

The Dictator’s Playbook

Carol Zar

Watch and discuss a PBS series on how dictators come to and retain power.

Not So Dirty Harry

Pat McKinley

Enjoy four films showing the lighter side of Clint Eastwood.

Flying with Superman in the 1940s & 1950s: Examining an American Pop Culture Icon

Mike Korcek

Look at Superman’s history through comic books, radio, tv, and movies.

Politicians & Military Leaders of the Confederacy

Al Ottens

View documents and hear stories of Confederate leaders.

Come Party with LLI

Consider this newsletter a “save the date” for our traditional LLI Soiree, a social gathering on Friday, June 16, at Hopkins Park in DeKalb. We can promise you delicious hors d’oeuvres and desserts, made by LLI members, and the time to talk together.

Watch for an invitation in May; guests are welcome too. All proceeds benefit LLI.

Come Lunch with LLI

LLI will be gathering once again for a delicious luncheon, hosted by the Ellington’s Restaurant in the Holmes Student Center, during our spring session (March 14-May 9). The date and menu will be announced later, so watch your email for details. The previous luncheon was a big hit, and we are looking forward to another successful gathering.

– *Judy Olsen*

Staying in Touch

Sometimes, LLI members want to communicate with each other as a group, perhaps with news of a member’s health, or a new email address, or an event of interest to many. We do that through our informal Google Group. You need to sign up for the group separately from LLI enrollment. So, if you’d like to be in the know, just send a note with your email to Carol Zar at czar@niu.edu. You’ll then get occasional messages as regular emails. If you’ve already done this, you need not do it again.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

LLI Spring 2023 March 14–May 9
 Spring Luncheon TBA
 Soiree 2023 June 16
 LLI Fall 2023 Sep. 12–Nov. 2
 LLI Winter 2024 Jan. 16–Feb. 8