



# Five Colleges Learning In Retirement

Peer-led Life Long Learning in the Pioneer Valley

Amherst College - Smith College - Hampshire College - UMASS Amherst - Mount Holyoke College

## March 2022 Newsletter

### Inside this Month's Issue:

[Council Corner](#)  
[Member Spotlight](#)  
[Encore Lectures](#)  
[President's Letter](#)



### Food Lecture Series

A free Zoom series on food opened in February with Amherst baker David Henion, and will continue with two cookbook writers. Each program begins at 3 p.m. and ends around 4:30.

The first cookbook writer, Sandra Oliver, will present on March 13. She did demonstration cooking at Mystic Seaport and now lives on Islesboro Island in Maine, where she runs her "Pretty Good Farm" and has written five cookbooks, all now out of print. Nina Scott tells us that the cookbook she really loves ("Maine Home Cooking") is due to be re-issued in paperback. Sandy's talk will be on the making of this book.

Nancy Harmon Jenkins, who will present on April 3, is Nina's college classmate and the author of eight books about food, including "The Mediterranean Diet Cookbook," the topic of her talk to us. Nancy has lived all over the Mediterranean, including Spain, Greece, Lebanon, and Italy. She divides her time between Camden, Maine, and an olive farm in Tuscany. Nancy has written a cookbook called "Virgin Territory," which is all about her farm, the olive harvest, and recipes featuring olives and olive oil. Don't look at them; you will start salivating.



### Demystifying Cryptocurrency: A Primer



After reading an article or seeing a television ad about Bitcoin, Coinbase or some other type of cryptocurrency, do you find yourself thinking: "I don't understand this at all"? This program, consisting of a lecture and question and answer session, is intended to clear up some of our bafflement by explaining the basics of cryptocurrency and why we should understand it, even if we never intend to invest in it.

Neil W. White, Assistant Professor of Economics at Amherst College, will present the talk on Zoom on Friday, March 25, at 1:30 P.M. He teaches Macroeconomics, Money and Banking, and Monetary Theory and Policy. Similar to the Great Decisions format, he will show a brief video, speak, and then open up the program for questions.

Jay Russell, who admits to being baffled by cryptocurrency, arranged the talk.

### Special Programs Funding

The food lectures and cryptocurrency program are funded by an LIR fund dedicated to providing support for programs outside the regular seminars and winter and summer offerings. Any member who would like to organize a program may get more information from the Special Events Committee. The chair is Ellen Kosmer, [kosmer@ays.yale.edu](mailto:kosmer@ays.yale.edu).

## Council Corner

Why do people in New York stand ON line and why is our Council not called THE Council? These are inscrutable questions. Council is the legislative body of LIR. Once a month, we cover a lot of ground in a two-hour meeting, discussing issues and making decisions about the future of LIR.

Members of LIR need to know what their Council is doing. Council Corner is where you will be able to read the highlights of what transpired at the most recent Council meeting.

Here are the highlights of the meeting on February 10, with 23 people attending:

Ellen Kosmer reported on the following upcoming special events, "Demystifying Cryptocurrency," "The Making of the Cookbook 'Maine Home Cooking,'" "The Mediterranean Diet: Then and Now," and a lecture by David Henion of Henion's Bakery. Honoraria were approved for these events.

Past President Nancy Denig suggested the possibility of holding the Spring Preview in a hybrid format (both in person and on Zoom). It's too early to determine whether Smith College will be available as a venue (Covid-dependent), so we will discuss this issue again in March.

Monroe Rabin, our Treasurer, assures us that LIR is financially healthy, something we should all be proud of.

Great Decisions topics were confirmed by Bruce Brewer, and registration will begin in a few weeks through a website process that Mindi Winter, our Office Manager, has developed.

Jane McMurrich reported that Interest Groups are alive and well and looking for more participants. These groups are listed under "Programs" on our website.

Instead of a formal spring social event (interrupted by the pandemic), the Events Committee proposed a more informal get together under a pavilion at Look Park on June 1. The Council supported the idea.

Mindi is working to develop a better database to keep track of our members and our finances.

Our President, Tyll van Geel, explained that LIR has a massive amount of material in our archives. We discussed how best to preserve the organizational history and institutional memory. More on this later as we determine the best practices.

Writing to Remember was specifically discussed to determine if there is a better way to assign participants, other than the lottery, given the popularity of WTR and the desire of participants to remain in the same group for multiple semesters.

The Strategic Planning Committee, chaired by Tyll, has sent out a survey to all LIR members. We want to know what you, the members, want from your organization. Stay tuned.

Bob Cohen



Screenshots of the Council meeting taken by Katy van Geel

# LIR Member Spotlight

## Bonnie Strickland Publishes Autobiography after Writing to Remember Inspiration



For Bonnie Strickland, it started off as an idea. The idea morphed into a concept, and then into a plan. Spurred on by a Five College Learning in Retirement's Writing to Remember seminar, her autobiography was published in November.

Titled "Leaving the Confederate Closet: A Southern Lesbian's Journey," the 243-page memoir grew out of Strickland's association with Learning in Retirement. "I found a home in [LIR's] Writing to Remember," she said.

The nonfiction work is a collection of memories and recollections. "It starts out with me upstairs at my desk, sort of musing over a tattered old Confederate flag," she said. "That became a theme – how I felt about growing up in the South."

For 11 years, Bonnie taught at Emory University in Atlanta, where many of her beliefs about people and politics were forged. She served as Dean of Women at Emory, one of the first women elevated to such stature, and marched in civil rights demonstrations.

"I got all sorts of unwanted publicity and marriage proposals from guys who wanted to date me, and wanted me to call them back," she said. "But of course I never did."

By then, her sexual identity was fixed.

Her most powerful moments were after she had settled into the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, joining the faculty in 1973, and when in 1987, she was elected president of the American Psychological Association.

"My research was always out of the mainstream," she said. "Some of my early research was on African American children, gays and lesbians. We looked at lesbians and found they were every bit as healthy as the control group."

Bonnie retired in 2002, but it didn't stick.

"My formal retirement was in 2002, which I flunked," she said. "I continued to teach a small honors seminar."

"All I ever wanted to be was a school teacher – from the first grade," she said. "I supervised honors students interested in mental health careers. They still come back to see me."

"I can't get rid of them," she smiled. "But I don't want to."

One of Bonnie's most memorable feats was a three-week trip into the Upper Mustang, a remote and roadless area north of Nepal. "We trekked 180 miles. There was no running water, no wheels, no electricity, not even roads. "It is something I will never forget, being in the snow and hiking up maybe 14,000 feet."

Bonnie is the author of academic studies, most centered on the disadvantaged or marginalized, including gays and lesbians. She lives with her partner Marjorie Nott in a sun-drenched house on a small lake in Belchertown, filled with memorabilia gathered from a lifetime of activism, adventure and academics.

David Whitney



## Encore Lectures Continue

Some of the best presentations from the fall are offered in the Encore program.

Here is what's coming up this month on Zoom.

[Click here](#) to register for the free lectures.

### Friday, March 4

#### Helium, 10 to 10:50 a.m., Laura Frossard

Helium, the second most common element in the universe, has many unique properties. It was considered nearly valueless until the end of the 20th century, when helium became recognized as crucial for use in nanotechnology, supercomputing, and medical imaging. The solution to the Earth's energy needs may lie in fusion, and the most efficient fusion reactors require helium.

#### Mystic River, 11 to 11:50 a.m., Chuck Aulino

The presentation is an analysis of and a commentary on the movie "Mystic River." Using short clips from the movie, we will identify key aspects of the story and analyze the motivations and actions of the characters.

### Friday, March 11

#### Death of the Beatles, 10 to 10:50 a.m., Robert Cohen

The Beatles were the greatest pop music group ever. Their breakup was tragic, and many events and relationships conspired to bring an end to the Fab Four. I will discuss those and more, while including several musical interludes and lots of slides.

#### Mom, Pop, and Ellie – why it took two German Moms to raise an only child, 11 to 11:50 a.m., Jane Holloway

A 78-year-old looks back on her childhood growing up with three parents: a mother, a father, and a live-in aunt who was a generation older than both of them. Although they were sisters, Mom and Ellie were very different people and had a complicated relationship. Come join a photo-journey to discover the connections between the 1915 World's Fair, Dr. Spock, a Madonna collection, and the influence of an aunt on this only child.

### Friday, March 18

#### Harry Houdini – More than an Escape Artist, 10 to 10:50 a.m., Mitchell Darer

This was part of a program about the Era of Vaudeville, but it turns out that Houdini was also an inventor, promoter, author, actor, director, producer, aviator, anti-spiritualist, and much more! There is a special connection between Houdini and Holyoke.

#### Music and Dance on the Lewis and Clark Expedition, 11 to 11:50 a.m., Sara Crawley

Traveling across an unknown land was hard work, but the members of the expedition found ways to celebrate and ease the burdens with music and dance. We know only limited details from the diaries of the explorers. This presentation looks at speculation about what they might have sung and how they might have danced.

### Friday, March 25

#### Tulips, 10 to 10:50 a.m., Seren Derin

This presentation will first focus on the origins of tulip plants. The second part will look into tulip mania in Netherlands and the present day tulip futures market.

#### Weaving and Spinning: Myths, Fairytales, and Folklore, 11 to 11:50 a.m., Martha Cohen

This presentation explores the prevalence and value of weaving and spinning in many ancient cultures throughout the world as illustrated in selected myths, fairy, and folk tales. Many tales will be shared, making this a good choice for those folks who enjoy listening to stories.



# Letter from the President



Dear 5CLIR Members,

In February you received an invitation to respond to a survey sent by our Strategic Planning Committee. (A report based on the survey will be delivered to Council in early May.)

The survey, of course, was not a test, but let's suppose it was. You are on a committee trying to design the S.A.T. (short for Senior Aptitude Test).

Which of the following is most analogous to 5CLIR?

- (a) A member-owned club
- (b) A poetry slam
- (c) A health club
- (d) A sanctuary or retreat
- (e) Great courses

The test makers now have to decide on the right answer. Focusing first on (c), they agree this is not a totally implausible answer. It may be possible that 5CLIR can promote neurogenesis. The science in this area is promising, but still up-in-the-air; 5CLIR may foster adult neurogenesis. But someone notes that 5CLIR is not just about the engagement of the mind. People join in order to socialize as well. Another person points out that health clubs are places for both physical improvement and socialization. So, for the moment, the test makers agree that (c) is at least not an incorrect answer.

Now the discussion turns to (b). Perhaps 5CLIR is like having volunteers bring their "poetry" (aka presentations) to an appreciative audience. The test makers see the metaphor but decide to bracket that answer. Turning to (d), yes, 5CLIR has been serving members as a sanctuary in order to get away from the anxiety of the daily concerns of life, like a plunge into a novel. Then there is (e).

The test writers note that the Preview catalog is a bit like looking at the offerings on the Great Courses webpage. But 5CLIR's "lectures" are offered by rotating members of the audience, not by hired gurus. Finally, the test writers consider (a). "Not so bad," says one person, "but it seems imprecise, vague, even misleading."

So, if you were drafting the question on the S.A.T. exam, how would you write it? Is there an analogy you would want added to the list? What would be the best answer? Would you assert that the only correct answer is "all of the above" or "none of the above?"

My best,  
Tyll

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## Deadline for Fall Seminar Proposals



While members have just launched into their spring seminars, it's time for those considering moderating a fall seminar to develop a proposal. The deadline to submit proposals for the fall is Monday, March 21. Proposals can also be submitted before then to give the Curriculum Committee a head start on reviewing submissions.

The proposal forms are available on the LIR website under Help and Resources, 5CLIR Forms. The forms also include guidelines for proposals.