HANDBOOK FOR PARTICIPANTS

FIVE COLLEGE LEARNING IN RETIREMENT

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Table of Contents

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Five College Learning in Retirement (5CLIR) offers a wide variety of activities focused on learning and socializing. Central to our learning activities are the semester-long peer-led seminars and workshops, where members actively participate in educating themselves and one another. This guide is is designed to help members of 5CLIR get the most ot these core learning experiences.

A **seminar** provides an opportunity for its participants to learn together about a topic. Seminar formats vary widely, from formal presentations to the group by individual participants to shared experiences (reading poetry, short stories or excerpts from individual writings, or listening to music or viewing a film). Each participant takes responsibility for leading some sessions or parts of sessions. Ample time for group discussion is always included.

A **workshop** focuses on learning a new skill-set or improving an existing skill-set, through demonstrations by the moderators together with hands-on member participation. Workshop topics can range from artistic creations such as learning how to make collages to learning new computer skills.

This document provides basic information about joining and participating in seminars and workshops as well as links to more detailed information available on the **5CLIR web site**.

I: MEMBERSHIP, REGISTRATION, AND GENERAL POLICIES

In order to participate in 5CLIR's seminars and workshops, you must be a full member of the organization for the current membership year, which runs from July 1 to June 30.

5CLIR seminars are offered during two 10-week semesters, Fall and Spring, each with its own registration period.

1. Becoming a member

A membership form must be submitted each year together with the payment of dues for the desired membership category before your registration requests can be processed. See **Membership and dues** for current information about membership options and dues.

2. Learning about upcoming seminars and workshops

The Preview: The semi-annual Preview provides members with details regarding the seminar and workshop offerings for the upcoming semester. Moderators of seminars and workshops for the following semester are available to answer members' questions and may offer relevant handouts. If the Preview is held in person, moderators may also bring books and other materials for prospective participants to browse.

Online Previews include short interviews with each moderator as well as breakout rooms where participants can meet with moderators in smaller groups. Handouts prepared by the moderators are attached to the online version of the Catalog (see below.)

The Catalog: During an in-person Preview, the printed Catalog, listing all of the seminars and workshops being offered, is distributed. Each offering has a description of the purpose or goal of the seminar or workshop and a description of the expected role of participants, as well as the name of the moderator, contact information, dates, times, and locations. In addition, the Catalog includes descriptions of 5CLIR Interest Groups and other programs for members. **Archived catalogs**.

If you are unable to attend the Preview, or if it is held online, the Catalog will be mailed to you. You may also view it online at **5CLIR.org** under the Programs tab.

3. Registering for seminars and workshops

You may register, either online or by filling out the paper registration form, for as many seminars and workshops as your schedule permits. This form asks you to list seminars in order of preference and to specify how many seminars you wish to take in total. The link to the current registration form is at **5clir.org/forms**.

Take note of the "lottery deadline," which occurs about three weeks after the Preview. While registration is possible after this deadline, some seminars may be full after that date.

Full members 5CLIR who have participated in seminars for at least four years may request auditor status for the semester. Moderators determine how many auditors they are willing to accept as well as expectations for auditors.

Additional information about registration policies is included in Appendix E of the **5CLIR Operations Manual**.

4. Lotteries and wait lists

The lottery is designed to allocate the available spots in an oversubscribed seminar or workshop randomly among those registering for it. It generally takes place within a week of the deadline. If you register after the deadline, you are not eligible for the lottery. However, you can register for any seminar that still has open spaces after the lottery has been completed.

Members who do not get into the number of seminars they request are placed on wait-lists for oversubscribed seminars in their list and may have an opportunity to join a seminar if a place opens up. The wait-lists are kept by the LIR Office Manager, who will contact members from the wait-list in order to determine if any wish to accept an open slot.

The lottery process applies only to 5CLIR's fall and spring seminars and workshops. For other programs, such as Extracurricular Activities and Short Summer Seminars, registration is on a first-come, first-served basis.

Lottery and wait list policies are described in Appendix D of the **LIR Operations Manual**.

5. Attendance policies

Regular attendance is assumed. 5CLIR's attendance policies are described in Appendix E of the .**5CLIR Operations Manual**.

6. Additional Fees

Additional fees may be charged to cover minor expenses of some workshops and seminars. Major expenses, including space rental and parking in college or university parking lots, are covered by your membership dues.

LIR policy on additional fees is included at the end of Appendix E of the **5CLIR Operations Manual**. The contribution limit for copying has been raised to $5.

7. Guests

You may invite a guest to your seminar with the permission of the moderator. However, individual guests are limited to one such invitation per semester. See p. 10 of the **5CLIR Operations Manual**.

8. Exchange of ideas during a seminar

Freedom of speech, including the expression of ideas that may be unpopular, is vital to the learning on which our organization is built. Equally important, the recognition of deeply held views and the discussion of such views should take place in an atmosphere of mutual respect and civil discourse. See p. 12 of the **5CLIR Operations Manual**.

II. BEFORE SEMINARS BEGIN

Participant lists are typically available at least two months before the start of the semester. What should participants anticipate during this period?

9. Communications from the office manager and moderator

Shortly after the lottery is completed, you will get notices from the office manager telling you which seminars you were admitted to together with a participant list for each one. Soon after that your moderator(s) will also send you an email welcoming you and providing additional information regarding their seminars, such as a list of topic choices, necessary materials, and schedule details.

In order to prepare the schedule, moderators may ask you to select your preferred topic from a list or to consult with them if you wish to propose a topic that is not on the list. It is up to the moderator

to accept such a topic. Moderators may also ask for dates on which you will not be able to lead a session.

10. Finalizing the schedule

Expect your moderator to share a final schedule with all participants well in advance of the start of the seminar. The moderator may want to set up a sequence of topics that is chronological, such as for a history seminar, or pair the discussions of two complementary topics on a particular date, or include a field trip or event that is relevant to the subject of the seminar.

III. ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

5CLIR focuses on a collaborative approach to learning. The seminars are "peer-led," meaning that each participant is required to take part of the responsibility for the success of the seminar. This can entail a variety of activities; typical examples include preparing a report on some aspect of the seminar's overall topic or developing discussion questions for the group on a particular issue. Other formats are possible if the moderator agrees. In addition, all participants are expected to contribute to discussions throughout the semester.

This section pertains more to 5CLIR seminars than to workshops, since workshops focus more on hands-on techniques and procedures. The suggestions made here are not to be taken as the only or the best approach since 5CLIR encourages inventiveness and creativity in the use of concepts and methods.

11. Choosing a topic and format

Seminar sessions can take a number of different forms depending on the type and topic of the seminar. A typical seminar focuses on a broad subject area and each participant chooses a topic in that area, either from a list provided by the moderator or by agreement from the moderator on a topic suggested by the participant. In many seminars, participants present reports on their topics, using handouts and/or audio-visual aides such as PowerPoint, movies, recordings, etc. At least 15 or 20 minutes should be allowed for general discussion, either at the end of the hour or during your presentation.

Other seminars may focus on one or more books, poems, music or films that all members of the seminar read, listen to or view. Here the role of the session leader is to initiate and focus the discussion on some aspect of the work. Still other seminars can be based totally on discussion, where each participant is responsible for leading the discussion on one or more topics relating to the subject of the seminar.

Moderators often provide participants with a list of topic choices. However, you may have your own idea of a topic you feel fits in to the subject of the seminar for your session, or you might have an

idea for an innovative format for your own session. You should consult with the moderator beforehand to determine if the moderator will agree to accept your proposed topic or format.

12. Finding resources

A large part of the educational experience in seminars takes place during researching your topic for your session. Local libraries are a good place to start allowing you to begin your search online. Many of these libraries are in cooperative relationships with multiple other area libraries, giving you access to a large number of resources. If you are a resident of Massachusetts, you are entitled to a Boston Public Library card, which provides access to both online and material resources from the state's libraries.

Another major resource is the vast amount of material and information on the web. It is important to make sure that information obtained using a search engine such as Google, Google Scholar or Wikipedia is relevant and from a trusted source. You can also search the major online booksellers such as Amazon or Barnes and Noble for lists of books relevant to your topic using key words.

As a member of 5CLIR you are able to use any of the Five College's academic libraries (Amherst College, Smith College, Mt. Holyoke College, Hampshire College and the University of Massachusetts), although the rules governing that use vary among the institutions. Each academic library receives a list of current members from the 5CLIR Office Manager each year. See the 5CLIR **library resources page**.

13. Audio-visual equipment and other technical help

Technical problems with audiovisual equipment (PowerPoint, Zoom, videos, recordings, flash drives, etc.) can disrupt the timing and the information of your presentation. Be sure that you have the right tools to prepare your presentation and that the room, if the seminar meets in person, has the capacity to connect with your equipment. Always check out the equipment you intend to use beforehand, whether the seminar is in-person or online. Ask the moderator or alternative technical support for help, including scheduling a trial run the week before your session.

The 5CLIR office owns some AV equipment that you can borrow. To learn what is available and to schedule your use of the equipment, contact the 5CLIR office manager. Members of the **Tech Committee** are also available to help you with software, such as PowerPoint or Keynote, with hardware for connecting your laptop to the AV system in the seminar room, or with sharing your screen in online seminars.

14. Timing your session

Seminar meetings last for around two hours with a break of 10 to 15 minutes in the middle. Each hour can take many forms, but many split the time into two sessions led by different participants. If a session includes a presentation, 25 to 35 minutes are typically allowed for the presentation,

leaving at least 15 minutes for discussion. Practice your presentation in advance to be sure that you can get through the material you want to present with plenty of time for discussion.

15. Handouts

 Handouts can be used for multiple purposes such as

- a broad outline of your topic to help seminar members to follow along;

- a timeline that includes events you will not be addressing specifically;

- pictures or photographs relevant to your presentation;

- supplemental material that adds to your topic, but is beyond the scope of what you can cover given the time limitations; or

- open-ended questions to jump-start discussion.

Materials distributed in seminars should be related to the topics at hand. The circulation of petitions or requests that people take some political or social action is prohibited. See the **5CLIR Operations Manual**, p. 12.

APPENDIX: BEST PRACTICES

Arrive on time for in-person or Zoom sessions.

Be well prepared through your research into your topic, and make sure your report is clear and well organized.

Practice your presentation ahead of time by reading it aloud to determine if there are any places you are having difficulty with. Stay within the time limit your moderator suggests for presentations.

Stay on topic while presenting or during the discussion, but be open to alternative ideas when offered.

Whether you read your presentation or speak it while consulting your notes, be sure that your notes are easy to read, and that important areas are in **bold** so you won't forget them.

Speak loudly and clearly. For an in-person seminar, use a microphone if one is available. Standing up and facing the audience will also help those with hearing loss follow your presentation. For an online seminar, check your microphone settings.

If you are yourself hard of hearing, consider hearing aids (in person) or headphones (online.) Choose your seat carefully in an in-person seminar so that you will be able to see the speaker and other participants.

Inform the other seminar members about when you prefer to take questions, for example, during your presentation or not until after you have completed your presentation.

Provide plenty of time for follow-up discussion and questions.

Make arrangements in advance for audiovisual or other equipment and give that equipment a trial run before your session.

Practice Zoom or using online resources during your session by taking advantage of assistance and trainings offered by the 5CLIR tech committee.

During other members' presentations, avoid carrying on conversations or looking at emails.

Make sure your cell phone is off before and during class. Remember to turn it off again after breaks. If you must take a call, leave the room or mute yourself on Zoom.

Be brief in your comments and try not to dominate the discussions.

The free and full exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of mutual respect for the ideas and sensibilities of others is a core value of 5CLIR. Discussions are a time for active listening as well as self-expression. Work to create and maintain an atmosphere of mutual respect and civil discourse at all times.