



ALFA-BITS

June
2017

ALFA President's Notes

Thank you, everyone, for making ALFA a great success. ALFA just keeps getting better and better each year.

Fitchburg State University has provided classroom space at several sites and also gives us the use of Hammond Hall for special events. In addition, we offer satellite classes at the Fitchburg Art Museum, Brooks Pond Cottage, Fitchburg Senior Center, Wachusett Wildlife Sanctuary, Barre Falls Dam, Sholan Farms, and Leominster Public Library. ALFA would not be able to offer as many classes as we have without the generous support of all these groups. Thank you, thank you.



The Board has been very busy this year. George French has done a tremendous job getting out the ALFA-Bits. Getting in all those articles about the classes and special events is not an easy task. Joyce Hinckley has headed up a group to craft a strategic plan for ALFA. Carol DeCarolis has proposed a "bring-a-friend" program to introduce new people to ALFA. Elaine Page and the Special Events Committee have organized trips to the deCordova Museum in the fall, and Emily Fine and the Food for Thought Committee have planned great programs on the NEADS service-dog program and on Haunted Hikes in New Hampshire. All of the members of the Board have worked very hard to make us a great organization.

The university is working on online registrations that may be ready next year. More information will come during the summer.

We all enjoyed the Grand Finale. A big shout-out to Sally Cragin for stepping in to give an enlightening talk on "New England Visionaries and Crackpots" after the scheduled speaker had to cancel. Thank you, Sally, for all you do for ALFA. The lunch was great, the desserts even better, and the harmonica performance by students was great. After lunch, radio personality Ray Brown spoke on bird migration. Who knew that some birds migrate south one way and come back a different way? Not me.

Dr. Lisa Moison, Dani Langdon, and Diane Thibodeau have been there for ALFA all year, acting as liaison with the university and assisting in curriculum, registrations, scheduling, and more. They do it all, and we owe them a big debt of gratitude. Thank you.

I have really enjoyed being President of the ALFA Board for the past two years. The time just flew by. Joyce Hinckley will move into this position, and I am confident that she will do a superb job. I will go back to my old ALFA job as chair of the Welcoming Committee. Linda Olson will remain on the job, too, so be kind to us when we call. We always need your help as class aides. Have a great summer.

Linda Kennedy

Mark Your Calendar

Oct. 30 — Fall Special Events Trip: Lyman Estate, Waltham, and deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park, Lincoln. Price of \$76 per person includes lunch at Colonial Inn in Concord. Bus departs at 8:15 a.m. from Mall at Whitney Field, Leominster.

Sept. 26 — Food for Thought: NEADS assistance dog program. 2:30 p.m. Ellis White Lecture Hall.

Oct. 31 — Food for Thought: "Haunted Hikes in New Hampshire." 2:30 p.m. Ellis White Lecture Hall.

Jan. 10 — Winter Special Events Trip: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, browse your favorite art preferences. Price of \$37 covers transportation and admission. Lunch at the one of museum's restaurants. Departs at 8:45 a.m. from Mall at Whitney Field.

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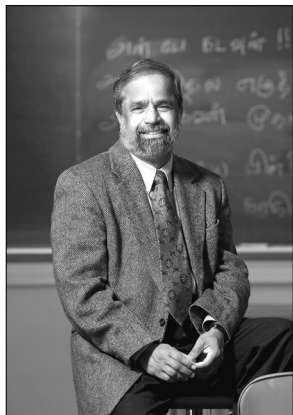
Also Inside:

Mediterranean Cooking, Japanese Flower Arranging, *Hamlet*, Abstract Realism in Pastels, Exploring Gender, Press and Politics, Introduction to Islam, and more ... including (above) playing with fire.

Meet Your ALFA Teacher

Dr. John Paul: 'He Makes You Think'

John Paul has been teaching for ALFA longer than any other instructor and has taught more courses than anyone else. Dr. Paul taught his first ALFA class in 2005 and has taught almost every year since. He's explained and explored Early Christianity, The Reformation, The Middle Ages, India, The Life of Gandhi, and more. This spring he taught a class on the British Raj using the PBS series "Indian Summers" as a starting point.



Dr. John Paul

That is enough to celebrate, but Dr. Paul is more than a list of classes. "He makes you think" or "He takes you places you couldn't imagine knowing about" are some ALFAs' comments. They're right. In a typical class you think along with him and sort out answers to questions that are complex, comparative and compelling. His infectious smile and gentle manner overcome any shyness or insecurity felt in asking a question or joining a discussion.

How Dr. Paul came to lead those discussions is a complex tale of how someone from a traditional South Indian family came to be a professor of history at Fitchburg State University, an odyssey so improbable that it has him wondering about the meaning of it all. This is a time in all our lives when we are all asking that same question. There may not be concrete answers, but it is comforting to know that John Paul is bringing his intellect, humor, and compassion to the examination.

He serves a model and inspiration for all ALFA: Never stop learning. Never stop teaching. Don't be afraid of the questions. Search for the answers.

By Joyce Ayadi Hinckley

How to Get Involved

ALFA could not function without the help of volunteers. If you would like to lend a hand, please contact the ALFA office in Fitchburg State University's McKay Campus Building C, (978) 665-3706.

We invite ALFAs to submit articles, reviews, artwork, or poems for publication in ALFA-Bits. Email your submissions, requests for information, or story ideas to geo.r.french@gmail.com or call (978) 345-6553.

Editor, George R. French
Photography, Gail Hoar, Jon Jones
Writers, Joyce Hinckley, Joanne Huse



Eric Budd and Joe Moser moderate a spirited discussion.

They're Coming to America

ALFA's second annual Winterlude, held during winter break, featured two thought-provoking films about immigration.

Brooklyn, a movie adapted from Colm Toibin's novel of the same name, is as much the coming-of-age story of a young Irish girl in the early 1950s Brooklyn, N.Y., as it is the story of starting a new life in a new country on one's own and yet surrounded by strangers who care.

ALFA Winterlude

Who Is Dayani Cristal?, part documentary and part fiction, examines the harrowing journey and death of a young man trying to get to America in order to provide a better life for his wife and two children. His body is found in a desolate Arizona desert with no identification except a tattoo on his chest: "Dayani Cristal." The movie imagines the man's journey from Central America through Mexico and over the border while documenting the real efforts on the part of Arizona's Forensics Department to discover the man's identity and to return his remains to his family.

After the screenings, ALFA instructor Bill Ayadi recounted his own immigrant experience from Tunisia to the United States by way of Europe. Joe Moser and Eric Budd, Fitchburg State University faculty members, moderated the spirited discussions prompted by the two movies.

By Joanne Huse, GRF photo

Class Enrollments Continue to Rise

Participation in ALFA classes hit an all-time high of 1,387 in 2016-2017, with 717 enrollments in the fall semester and 670 in the spring semester.

While many ALFAs take more than one course each session, the numbers also reflect a gratifying number of people signing up for the first time — 89 new ALFAs this spring. There also has been much enthusiasm for the special events throughout the school year with record numbers turning out for Winterlude, Food for Thought presentations, and the Shirley Pick Spring Series. ALFA trips continue to be popular excursions, usually having a wait list of eager travelers.

The Fitchburg State University administration has taken note of the growth of ALFA and continues to promote ALFA's mission in North Central Massachusetts.

By Joanne Huse



Sally Cragin a Hit at Grand Finale

Up until 8 p.m. the Sunday night before our Grand Finale all things were going as planned. Then a telephone call changed everything. Our featured speaker was seriously ill and could not make it to our Tuesday event. What could we do? Who could we find on such short notice? After placing a few frantic calls to potential speakers, Karen

Shirley Pick Spring Series

Pick remembered that Sally Cragin had remarked that she would love to be part of an ALFA event. We reached Sally at 9 p.m. and by 9:30 had a commitment and even a title: "A Field Guide to New England Crackpots and Visionaries." Researching and putting together a talk on such short notice was a lot to ask, but Sally promised a miracle and a miraculous performance she delivered.



Sally Cragin

Luckily, Sally had been thinking a lot about the wonderfully eccentric personalities that have emerged from our New England landscape. Several of the people she featured are well-known, Henry David Thoreau and Bronson Alcott to name two. Sally looked at them from a fresh viewpoint, not so much for their works and deeds, but for the personality traits and relationships that helped them create the things for which they have become known. Today they might be called eccentrics or even crackpots, but what ultimately arose from their experiences puts them soundly in the realm of visionaries. The same is true for others she spoke of, including Joseph Palmer who was jailed for wearing a beard and Rev. George Trask, an early anti-smoking crusader.

Sally said she is now thinking about putting together an entire class based on this topic, noting that many other interesting characters could be added to the ones she mentioned in her talk. As it was, the standing ovation that erupted at the end of her program was well-deserved.

By Gail Hoar

Bird Migration: The Longest Journey

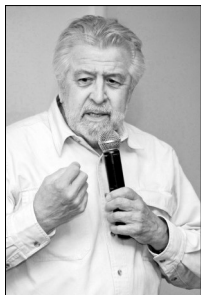
The program change in the Grand Finale morning session left a potentially awkward gap of nearly an hour between lunch and the scheduled afternoon talk on bird migration by Ray Brown. The popular radio personality, a consummate professional, filled the gap with an entertaining, informative question-and-answer session,

Food for Thought

off the cuff, and a recorded episode of his radio show, "Talkin' Birds."

His scheduled talk was a revelation. Birds' annual migration is truly an epic feat, fraught with challenges and danger. Birds use a variety of tools — sight, scent, and possibly even the earth's magnetic field — to navigate between temperate and tropical climes across oceans, deserts, and mountain ranges, through fair and stormy weather.

Ray Brown's mission is to encourage the appreciation of the natural world and promote the preservation and protection of the environment. As his appreciative audience will attest, his presentation was a great success. — GRF



Ray Brown

ALFAs Are on the Road Again

The ALFA trip this fall will be to the Lyman Estate in Waltham. The Vales, as the estate is also known, is one of the finest examples of a country estate in the United States. The historic country house, in the architectural style of the 18th century, is surrounded by 37 acres of lawns and gardens. We will be touring one of the oldest greenhouses in the country.

After a scrumptious lunch at the historic Colonial Inn in Concord, we will visit the deCordova Museum and Sculpture Park in Lincoln. This is a contemporary and modern museum with 70-plus outside sculptures on 35 beautifully landscaped acres.

The bus will depart at 8:15 a.m. Oct. 30 from the Mall at Whitney Field and return by 5 p.m. Cost, including lunch, is \$76 per person. Seating is limited to 55. No refunds unless the trip is canceled. Some walking required. — Gerene Sanguinet

Special Events Fall Preview

In January, we are planning a day trip to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. Come and spend a wonderful day surrounded by beauty!

The MFA is one of the most comprehensive art museums in the world. Its collection encompasses nearly 500,000 works of art from ancient Egyptian to contemporary, special exhibitions, and innovative educational programs.

The museum has undergone significant expansion with the opening of the Art of the Americas Wing, with four levels of American art from ancient to modern. The west wing of the museum was transformed with new galleries for contemporary art. In addition, there are multiple galleries for European, Asian, and African art, and wonderful examples of Impressionist art. You'll be able to browse through your favorite art preferences and lunch at any of the MFA's four eating spots.

Cost of \$37 per person covers transportation and museum admission. The tour departs at 8:45 a.m. Jan. 11 from the Mall at Whitney Field, Leominster. — Judy Shaughnessy

A Trip to Historic Boston

What a gorgeous January day we had to visit the JFK Library in Boston.

The Library's collection includes photographs, historical documents, campaign memorabilia, replicas, Kennedy family belongings, and other items. A film and recordings featuring President Kennedy's voice also afford visitors an in-depth perspective of the Kennedy White House.

Special Event

The JFK Library is the only place in the world that has John Adams' expense sheets for his trips to the Continental Congress in Philadelphia. If that doesn't impress you, take a look at Paul Revere's bill for horses he used in a series of rides delivering secret packets.

The nearby Commonwealth Museum has 20 million documents in the archives. Up until 2009, when Cambridge Seven Architects designed this specially equipped wing, these fragile, original documents were seen only on request. Now these gems are on display permanently, thanks to engineers at MIT who installed specialized lighting that uses argon gas.

After our library/museum experience, we were off to a fabulous meal at The Chateau in Waltham. It is such a treat to be on a bus with ALFA friends to share our day together and be dropped off door-to-door.

By Gerene Sanguinet



Something New: ALFA Inaugurates First Post-Class Discussion Group

How many times have you left your last ALFA class session and wished the dialogue could continue? That is exactly how the students in Art Skolnik's Science, Technology, and the Future class felt last year as the class was winding down. Animated discussions often continued in the hall after class ended and rarely was a person missing.

So, the students did something about it. They, together with Art Skolnik, asked the ALFA leadership if there was a way to hold further sessions. Working with Lisa Moison, a room to accommodate up to 25 students was found and a schedule running into April was set up.

The biweekly sessions drew a steady core group that was joined by others who attended as their schedules allowed. Art, an urban planner/designer and fellow of the American Institute of Architects, said his main problem is keeping up with the world's ever changing technology. Although he "limits" his research to philosophical, scientific, or intellectual articles that deal with where technology is leading humanity, that means reading or at least scanning 100 to 150 articles per day in preparation for the class.

What started Art on this research was his realization of the rapid evolution of technology and its growing impact on

our lives. Advancements in technology increased relatively slowly until today, he noted in a recent interview. Changes that used to take centuries now take decades or less, he said, and this is very disruptive to societies and individuals. Such change can greatly affect people's daily lives without giving them time to absorb or integrate the pros and cons of each new step legally, morally, philosophically, and logistically.

The impact of robotics on our workforce and rapid advancements in medical research — the use of stem-cell therapy, cloning, or even the lengthening of life expectancy — leave many economic, demographic, ethical, and religious questions dangling.

Art hopes attendees to his classes and discussions will be willing to "dump the baggage we have all learned" and look at the near future with open eyes and minds to understand where we are all heading and how to deal with it. He stated, "If our goal is to preserve humanity, we need to pay attention to where we are going. But if the goal is merely to increase our intelligence/knowledge then [things like] robots are the answer at the expense of humans being left behind and redundant."



Art Skolnik

Service Dogs, Haunted Hikes Are Scheduled This Fall

In September, John Moon from NEADS Service Dogs of Princeton will share how service dogs, properly trained and matched with their human partners, are able to lighten the load of "simple everyday tasks" most of us take for granted. How often do we think of the obstacles faced by families with children on the autism spectrum, veterans grappling with traumatic stress or a physical injury, or people with hearing loss — or about how a properly trained dog can mitigate the effects of limited mobility and independence.

Food for Thought Fall Preview

NEADS partners with correctional facilities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, where carefully screened and trained inmates work daily with each service dog in training. More than 250 volunteers help on weekends to socialize the "pups in training."

The program will be at 2:30 p.m. Sept. 26 in the Ellis White Lecture Hall, Hammond Building.

On Halloween, Marianne O'Connor, author of *Haunted Hikes of New Hampshire*, will give a talk full of spooky surprises. Sites some consider to be haunted are scattered throughout New Hampshire along its premier hiking trails. She'll highlight unusual ghost tales in the region, such as Devil's Den in New Durham, Chief Chocorua in Tamworth, Sasquatch of Ossipee, the Bomber Plane in Woodstock, and a murder mystery involving Bette Davis in Franconia.

The program will be at 2:30 p.m. Oct. 31 in the Ellis White Lecture Hall, Hammond Building.

Would You Like to Teach An ALFA Class?

Do you have a special interest or field of expertise?
Would you like to share your knowledge with engaged
lifelong learners?

If so, contact the ALFA office, (978) 665-3706.

Thank You, Volunteers

ALFA runs on the involvement and diligent efforts of dozens of volunteers. In plain fact, without help of volunteers, the program could not run.

ALFA class aides take attendance, greet newcomers, deliver ALFA alerts, assist the instructor, answer students' questions, and more.

Class aides for Session 3 were: Martha Kaulback, Linda Kennedy, Margaret Knowlton, Aldo & Joanne Bianco, Judy Shaughnessy, Odette Harvey, Arthur & Anne Young, Wayne & Nancy Gates, Jacqueline Stanton, Mary Alice Girling, Kathleen Pliska, Linda Norman, Carol DeCarolis, Kathy Coulson, Diane Putnam, Lucille Cormier, Barbara & Tom McGuirk, Nancy Meehan, Lorna Sulin, and Barbara Jablonski.

Class aides for Session 4 were: Carol Seling, Nancy Turner, Maxine Pincott, Ida Kymalainen, Carol Borja, Mary Ciuffetti, Robert Shaughnessy, Mary Alice Girling, Sharon Babcock-Robideau, Judith Normandin, Diane Rouleau-Gardula, Debora Freda, Linda Norman, Carol McShane, George French, Karen Pick, Terri Hillman, Aldo & Joanne Bianco, Margaret Knowlton, Linda Olson, Sandra Lolli, and Carol Housman.

ALFA greeters provide ALFA participants with parking information, directions to classrooms, and other information.

Greeters for Session 3 were: Judith Normandin, Linda Olson, Marie Stansel, and Nancy Turner.

Greeters for Session 4 were: Marie Stansel, Linda Olson, and Judy Shaughnessy.

If you would like to volunteer for one of these important roles, please call Linda Olson (978) 632-5523.

Italy: Out of Many, One

Professor Teresa Fava Thomas guided us in a whirlwind review of modern Italian history and culture. She pointed to the mountainous spine of the Italian peninsula that, combined with the seas surrounding three sides, enabled strong, if somewhat isolated, city-states like Florence, Venice, and Milan to become regional and international powers.

Modern Italian History

Successive invasions gave rise to a unification movement in the mid-19th century, championed by such figures as Mazzini and Garibaldi. Dr. Thomas pointed out the difficulties, before and after unification, that befell farm workers and small landowners and which gave rise before WWI to great immigration to North and South America. The post-war resurgence of Italian industry was cut short by the worldwide depression in the 1920s. This poor economic climate abetted the rise of Mussolini and the Fascists, even before Hitler's rise in Germany.

During WWII, Italy was the focal point of some of the most horrific action, resulting in many-thousands of military and civilian casualties and the destruction of historical and religious artifacts and sites such as the Monte Cassino abbey. After the war, Italy flourished, becoming a world leader in fashion, film, and industrial design.

Today, Italy shares with her sister EU countries, the benefits of membership, such as a common currency, and the problems of membership, such as illegal immigration.

This was a superior class. Dr. Thomas has the personal and academic background, excellent preparation, lecturing style, intelligence, and humor, thus making her a star in ALFA's and FSU's firmament. Watch for her next course!

By Harry Semerjian



Teresa Fava Thomas



Joe Choiniere's class studies animal tracks in the snow.

Woodland Creatures Made an Impression

Longtime ALFA instructor Joe Choiniere led our group of intrepid trackers on a number of great walks at Massachusetts Audubon's Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary. While there was little or no snow on the ground for most of the classes, it didn't stop the group from getting deep into the woods to find bobcat, porcupine, and, oh yes, wild turkey tracks.

Snow Tracking Winter Wildlife

On one snow-free day as Joe was giving a brief presentation on porcupines, a resident porcupine magically appeared outside of the classroom and gave us a great demonstration of just what Joe was teaching about.

A highlight of the program was a field trip to the shores of the Quabbin Reservoir near Petersham where we found a variety of tracks, not in the snow, but in the sand.

This trip also gave us a chance to meet and learn from another noted naturalist, David Brown, the author of the *Track-ards for North American Mammals* guide that many of the class use in the field. It was great to get his insights into the process of finding and identifying animal tracks.

Snow or no snow there was plenty to learn and the group had a great time in the outdoors.

Review and photo by Jon Jones

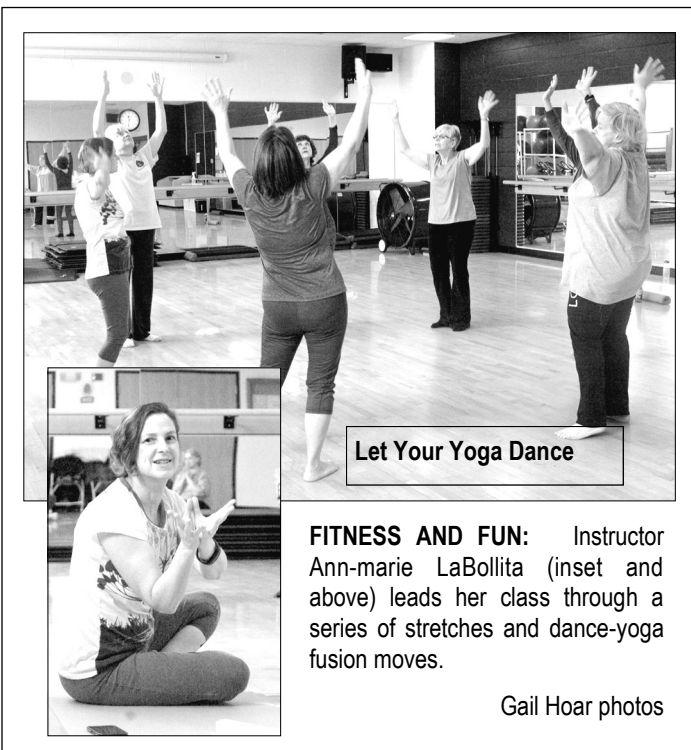
Don't Mess With Mother Nature

Once again mother nature proved how fickle she can be. We had very little snow for the class on winter tracking and a significant storm the second week of the wildflowers class. Instructor Joe Choiniere made the best of the conditions and got the class onto the trails at the Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary to watch spring bloom as the class progressed.

In our quest for plants we found twice-stabbed lady beetles (a black ladybug), hungry porcupines in hemlock trees, one of the oldest oak trees in Worcester County — and even some wildflowers. Two treks up Brown Hill let the group see the very early development of a few leaves of the hepatica flower and multiple blue and white blossoming plants two weeks later.

Spring finally arrived by our fourth session, and Wachusett Meadow came alive with color. Thanks to Joe's knowledge of the topic we were able to come away knowing the difference between a Hepatica and a Golden Alexanders and why these plants grow in the different habitats that make up the area.

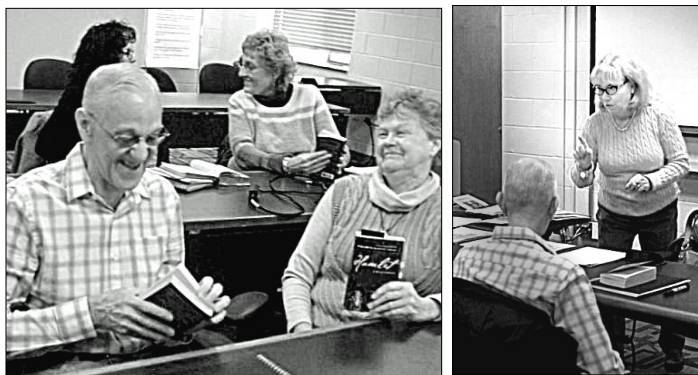
By Jon Jones



Let Your Yoga Dance

FITNESS AND FUN: Instructor Ann-marie LaBollita (inset and above) leads her class through a series of stretches and dance-yoga fusion moves.

Gail Hoar photos



ALFAs share a lighthearted moment while discussing Shakespeare's tragedy. Instructor Barbara McGuirk (above, right) makes a point.

The Bard's Great Dane Is No Dog

Shakespeare's *Hamlet* was presented by Barbara McGuirk, whose passion for all things Shakespeare, especially *Hamlet*, was truly infectious.

Barbara introduced us to Shakespeare and his family in Stratford-on-Avon and to the layout of the Globe Theatre in London. She also pointed out the particularities of Elizabethan theater-goers. The "groundlings" were an especially raucous group. Barbara pointed out that after exciting scenes calculated to catch the audience's attention, Shakespeare inserted calming scenes in order to keep the theater-goers' enthusiasm under control.

We learned that Shakespeare's tragic heroes, although different from one another, share certain characteristics, including free will, commitment, suffering, and transfiguration. After deciding on his action, the tragic hero can backtrack on his decision at any point.

Barbara explained the plot graph of the play: the exposition, the rising action, the climax, the falling action, and the resolution. She also discussed how minor characters such as Horatio and Fortinbras serve as foils to Hamlet.

Thank you, Barbara, for a dynamic, engaging, enlightening course.

By Kathy French, Gail Hoar photos

Spirituality on the Silver Screen

It's a given that students who enroll in Joe Moser's ALFA classes can depend upon viewing thought-provoking films and partaking in lively discussions. Joe's course offering on religion-themed films was no exception. Whether based upon Islam, Judaism, or Christianity, the common feature of the films is the impact faith had on each character's life — sometimes for the good, sometimes not.

Faith in Film

During the course of the five weeks, students traveled in time to a WWII Jewish ghetto, contemporary Iran, Ireland, Boston, Poland, and a battlefield to delve into the way individuals' belief systems affect their decision-making and the way these decisions lead to a variety of outcomes.

Powerful discussions emerged from viewing these films, whether they tackled religious questing, questioning, acquiescence, or acceptance.

One of the bonuses this term was being able to attend a talk and discussion by Michael Rezendes, who was featured in the film, *Spotlight*, which the class viewed.

By Gail Hoar

Demystifying the World of Islam

What exactly is Islam, and what does it mean to be Muslim? Anyone curious about this religion which is so much in the news these days would benefit from this course led by Bill Ayadi and Joyce Ayadi Hinckley.

About 20 of us sat through this fast-paced history of Islam, beginning with Muhammed.

Introduction To Islam

Many surprising facts came to light, notably the many similarities that exist among Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Bill and Joyce brought us through the centuries to modern day Islamic culture. We learned about the Koran, what it is, and why it is so important. We also discussed the differences between Sunnis and Shiites. (So much that is not covered in the media!)

As an additional delight, Joyce and Bill brought items each week for "show and tell" such as clothing, books, a very old copy of the Koran, some artwork, and handmade items. We even played "dress up" with hijabs, which added an element of fun to the material.

We all were enriched by this course, and would like to see "Intro to Islam, Part 2" on the schedule in the future.

By Darlene Townsend



Student gets Islamic makeover.



Instructor Nicholas Langhart (left) fields a student's question about architecture before the Civil War.

History in Bricks and Mortar

I have just completed Nicholas Langhart's course, "New England Architecture: Settlement to the Civil War." On my way home after each class, I found myself discovering the various architectural styles Mr. Langhart had discussed. This new awareness brought fun, excitement — and a little danger — to my drive home as I glanced at buildings and homes trying not to veer off the road!

New England Architecture

As a student, I am a compulsive notetaker, but it did occur to me early on that this was not necessary. Mr. Langhart expertly taps the visual modality to strengthen his lectures. He teaches through his wonderful collection of pictures of local and regional architectural examples.

So, with a click of the button of his slide projector, his easygoing manner, and his dry wit, all you have to do is sit back, relax, and enjoy the show! You will get it! You will learn the features of Medieval, Georgian, Federal, and other architectural styles from New England's past and have fun doing it!

I am looking forward to the next course in the series: "Great Buildings in New England Since the Civil War" and thinking how lucky we are to have ALFA and teachers like Nicholas Langhart — and to live in beautiful New England!

By Jacqueline Stanton, Gail Hoar photos



Lisa Regopoulos (second from right) and students critique the results of a class warmup exercise. Inset, Lisa demonstrates underpainting technique.

Two Shades of Pastel

A gasp-free introduction

ALFA is so fortunate to have Lisa Regopoulos, a professional, award-winning artist, as our pastel painting instructor. She starts each class with a demonstration of a new technique, then visits each student and makes suggestions for improvement. She never gasps in horror at some of the things we have done but always is warm, kind, and encouraging.

A testament to her success is the number of students who continue to take her classes and the beautiful works of art they create. Whether you are a novice or a seasoned artist, you will learn and enjoy pastel painting with Lisa as the leader.

By Carol DeCarolis

Concrete Praise for Abstract Course

Our community is fortunate to have ALFA and Lisa Regopoulos as one of our instructors. Seasoned artist or novice (like me), Lisa is an outstanding teacher. She has a way of making everyone feel special by making one feel relaxed and open to try new techniques.

Lisa's demonstrations at the beginning of each class set the tone and motivate students. She makes sure to give every one of her students positive feedback and is full of encouragement.

This class has been a pleasure to take and I look forward to more classes with Lisa Regopoulos.

By Raya Cannon

We Welcome Your Ideas

We welcome your suggestions about how we can make ALFA even more responsive to your interests and needs. If you have ideas for a new course or special event, contact the ALFA Office, (978) 665-3706.

The Sweet Sound of ... Harmonica

Always wanted to play the harmonica like Bob Dylan in the '60s or the great James Cotton or Little Walter? This is the class for you. No prior musical experience is required, but veteran musician or not, everyone was a beginner, as the harmonica is the only instrument played by both blowing out and breathing in.

Learn to Play The Harmonica

Starting off with the rudimentary tunes like "Hot Cross Buns" and "Jingle Bells," we progressed each week in complexity and harmony, learning chords, bends, riffs, and tremolo. Paul Luria is an accomplished musician and teacher who is able to bring real-life experiences of his musical adventures into the instruction. Through excellent handouts, some good YouTube references, and a lot of positive reinforcement, he introduced the class to "cross harp" and blues, often accompanying us on his guitar. He laid a great foundation of good technique and sound for those who may want to continue on.

It's fair to say we had a good time while learning, and by the sound of the ensemble at the beginning of the session compared to the end, some of us even practiced outside of class. This course was well subscribed and we hope there will be a Harmonica II soon.

By Tony Ingrisano



Exposed: The Secret Life of Birds

This is a wonderful outdoor class bringing you in close contact with the spring migrations of the birds returning to and passing through our area. It is led by Dick Knowlton, who is extremely knowledgeable in this field and the outdoors in general. Dick's style is low-key and friendly and he certainly knows the birds and everything about them.

Spring Birds Of Worcester County

As an outdoor class it is weather contingent both in terms of the environment you will be walking in and also how the weather has affected the birds you may see. A great opportunity to get out and see nature.

Dick is often assisted by his wife, Peg, who adds another helpful and expert teacher to the class.



Dick Knowlton at Wachusett Meadow

By Joellyn Nevins, Jon Jones photo

(Note: ALFA-Bits was sorry to learn that Dick and Peggy Knowlton are headed into retirement and will no longer be available to lead the seasonal birding class for ALFA. The wealth of knowledge they have brought to the program and their willingness to share it with us will be sorely missed by all who attended their classes. Thank you, Dick and Peggy.)

We Graduated Magma Cum Laude

Dr. Robert Champlin's class on volcanoes around the world was an exceptional learning experience.

After a brief introduction to the geologic processes of the distant past that have shaped our planet, we focused on volcanoes, earthquakes, tsunamis, and other natural disasters that have been instrumental in producing the landscapes we see today.

Super Volcanos

Dr. Champlin concentrated on the planet's many volcanoes, their locations, and the hazards posed by the different types of volcanic eruptions. We learned about one of the most exciting, yet dangerous, jobs in science — vulcanologist — and the methods they use to study the phenomena associated with volcanoes. Measuring seismic activity, ground movements, volcanic temperature, and geophysical properties requires sometimes perilous field work. We also learned about some of the laboratory research and data analysis involved.

We evaluated the possibility of future volcanic eruptions — far more powerful than any in recorded history — which may have catastrophic impact on both the planet and humanity.

Much of Dr. Champlin's teaching style incorporates



Instructor Bob Champlin fields a question about the relationship between volcanism and the movement of continental plates.

a narrative of his personal research. His ease in explaining concepts makes for an exceptional learning experience. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the hazards posed by volcanoes and methods to predict, monitor, and mitigate risk.

By Karen Koutrakos, GRF photo



Ethan Choiniere (center) helps students get fired up.

To Light a Fire

It is a lot more than just rubbing two sticks together!

Our small but dedicated group learned very early in the class that generating the heat needed to develop a glowing ember was pretty labor intensive. Then, once you got the ember, what do you do with it to actually achieve a flame?

Ancient Skills: Quest for Fire

Our instructor, Ethan Choiniere, a well-known expert in outdoor skills, led us through a wide variety of methods for creating embers and transferring them to a tinder package that can be used to ignite larger fuels for a fire that could be used for cooking or warming. We all learned very early in the class that if you don't have a proper tinder package to receive the embers and support ignition, you can expend a lot of energy for nothing.

Regular walks through the woods with Ethan to find the raw materials needed to build our fires gave us insight into how early man must have used trial and error to identify usable fuels and heat-producing techniques to make fire for protection, cooking, and warmth.

This was an informative, hands-on class with a very capable instructor.

Review and photo by Jon Jones

All the News That Fits We Print

Newspapers, radio, movies, television — have the media shaped our political landscape?

Katherine Jewell suggested that media have had a strong influence on the political system. In the 1890s, newspaper publishers battled to increase circulation, inflaming the feelings of Americans and pushing the country into a war with Spain. Soon "Remember the Maine" appeared everywhere, in print, on dinnerware, even on gum wrappers.

The Media And American Politics

As radios became a staple in American households, politicians grasped the opportunity to intimately involve themselves in the lives of average Americans. FDR, for one, used radio to go directly to the electorate with his "fireside chats."

Then came the influence of Hollywood. There was the concern that movies were being used to produce communist propaganda, yet Hollywood used films to help the war effort during WWII.

Television further connected politicians with the electorate. In the Kennedy-Nixon debates, how much did the set, lighting, and Kennedy's Hollywood know-how help to propel him into the White House?

All these topics, as well as the current media's influence on today's politics, led to good discussions and an interesting look at how there truly is, "nothing new under the sun."



Katherine Jewell

By Barbara McGuirk, Gail Hoar photo

Exploring Gender Beyond the Binary

I was eager to join this class, as it offered me an opportunity to sort out and try to clarify my confusion regarding gender identity. It turned out to be just that. Through video presentations, articles, and discussions, we explored the distinction between gender and sexuality, the strong, determining effect of culture, the many possibilities, attitudes, etc.

Gender Identity 101

The focus is on coming to terms with our discomfort, insecurity and ingrained cultural habits, to become less fearful, more open and accepting. For me personally, the scientific understanding of biology as it relates to this reality is very helpful.

It is both an intellectual and emotional exercise, helpful in clarifying and sharing. Instructor Dani Langdon provided the class with many statistics revealing the specifics which jolt us into the reality of how broad and deep the discrimination and suffering is, resulting from ignorance, bias, misunderstanding, and even hatred in certain cases.

If this course is repeated, I would strongly recommend it to anyone.

By Doris Leger

Our Love Affair With the Automobile

Anyone who appreciates admiring or driving a new or classic automobile would have enjoyed the American Iron class, led by Glenn Fossa. A third-generation car aficionado, his knowledge and love of all things “automotive” was apparent.

Using Power Point, slides, and videos, he covered the history and social significance of American automobiles. He took us into each decade of automobile manufacturing, tracing how smaller companies were bought up by larger or more profitable ones. We learned about Henry Ford’s use of the assembly line to cut costs from \$850 per car to \$300, making automobiles affordable for most people.

Cars made an impact on the America way of life. With more people buying cars, better roads were developed. People traveled more and motels sprang up. Families enjoyed a Sunday afternoon ride.

The class covered automobiles with which we were all familiar and less familiar ones such as the Chrysler turbine car. (Of the nine of these that remain, one is owned by Jay Le-



ALFAs get a good look at Gibby Lashua’s 1931 Model A Ford.

For our last class, we were treated to a visit by Gibby Lashua and his 1931 Model A Ford. Glenn Fossa’s class was very interesting and informative for both men and women in attendance.

By Wayne Gates



Students in Judith Lindstedt’s class belly up to the barre to prepare for the golfing season.

What to Do Before Your Tee Time

I wasn’t quite sure what to expect when I signed up for the class called “Stretch and Tone for Golf,” taught by Judith Lindstedt, but ALFA has outdone itself with this class. All who are participated in the class feel the way I do.

Judith is very knowledgeable about stretching in general, but she has done a wonderful job of putting together this class geared to golf. Judith keeps safety as a priority first of all, showing us how to warm up before getting into the full swing of stretching. Then with the use of a golf club, a chair and a barre in the front of a mirror, we work all the muscle groups needed to swing golf clubs in a safe manner. Finally, we do a cool-down at the end of the class.

All of the stretching exercises we practiced in class can be done at home, and Judith has put together a routine to be used as a warm-up just prior to teeing off.

I can’t say enough about how much I enjoyed this class, and I look forward to taking it again in the future.

By Bob Thomas, GRF photo

Those Muscles You Forgot You Had

This course is open to students at all levels of fitness. Movement and coordination are emphasized for seniors to exercise all muscle groups in the safest manner.

Instructor Judith Lindstedt is a retired performer whose career included dancing, choreography, directing, and producing. She has been an Actor’s Equity member and holds advanced degrees from Fitchburg State.

Stretch and Tone

Judith has a marvelous sense of humor but can be a task master, too, when she observes incorrect movements or techniques that could be harmful. Rest assured, you will come away from this class feeling energized and having stretched and toned muscles you forgot you had!

By Martha Kaulback

ALFA Archives Are Available

Archives documenting ALFA from its beginning in 2004 are housed in the ALFA Office at McKay Campus Building C. Materials, which may be signed out and returned, include historical documents, publicity, curriculum, brochures, issues of ALFA-Bits, Board meeting minutes, and more.

Whither the American Dream?

Instructor Lisa Moison asked the Community Read class whether we, as senior citizens, lived the American Dream of getting a good education, achieving success in our lives, and living better than our parents.

All but one person in the class felt that they had lived the American Dream: We worked hard, we went to college, we were upwardly mobile, and we had generally improved our lot in life from when we were children.

Community Read

Most students in the class were from working class backgrounds when they were children, but it did not seem to matter. Opportunities and mentors were abundant.

In his book, *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis*, Robert Putman gives a loud warning cry that, today, the American Dream is getting very difficult to achieve for children from the shrinking middle class and the low economic class, because both are finding that they are becoming socially, economically, and academically isolated from the benefits of the American Dream. This divide is what Robert Putnam calls the opportunity gap.

In class, we discussed the effects that this opportunity gap has on families, parenting, schooling, and communities. Robert Putnam spoke to the FSU community as a culminating segment of the community read. At the conclusion of his speech, he shared a web site that gives further insight and possible solutions to the opportunity gap.

This was a relevant, timely read that was wonderfully enhanced by both Dr. Moison and Dr. Putnam.

By Maxine Pincott

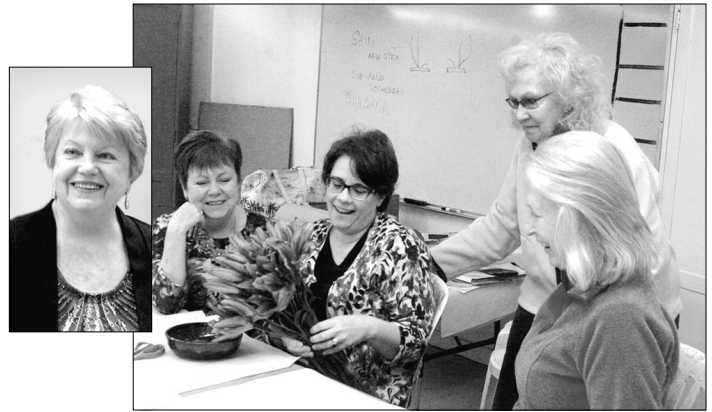


WOOL GATHERING: Instructor Sara Campbell (left) took an unconventional approach to introducing knitters to traditional Aran cable patterns without the pressure of having to complete a full-fledged Irish sweater in the limited timeframe of a five-week course.

Knitting Aran Patterns

Instead of having students plunge into a single complex project, she led them through a variety of patterns in easy-to-work squares. Students sometimes worked singly, sometimes collaboratively, as above. The result? Each knitter produced a variety of finished practice squares that could be combined into a pillow, blanket, or freestanding work of art.

Joanne Schreiner photos



Students in Gail Allo's (inset) class share a laugh.

An Ancient Art, Stamen to Stem

(Note: Due to high demand Gail Allo's popular flower arranging course was split into two sections in Session 4.)

When you see the flower arrangements in the Ikebana style, you may call them simplistic.

As Gail Allo showed us, it has definite conventions of shape, form, and line. Japanese artists spend many years studying and perfecting their craft. Most often nature and the out of doors are the focus.

Ikebana: Japanese Flower Arranging

Gail led us through four different styles of Ikebana — Chabana, Seika, Moribana, and Kabuwake. Each of these had the same basic beginning pattern of three main stems (*shin*, *soe*, and *tai saki*) with other stems to complement each. The finished arrangement must have an uneven number of stems. There is also a specific height for each stem.

Gail began each class with pictures and background of the different styles and then explained how we might adjust them to a more "Western style" of arranging depending on the type of flowers she was able to find.

Gail jokingly referred to our last arrangement as our final test. She provided us with many different flowers and we were able to choose any style for our final product.

By Jean Jones

You don't have to travel to Japan to learn the art of Ikebana. Just take the class offered by Gail Allo through the ALFA program.

The atmosphere in the classroom is calm, friendly, and encouraging. The additional material fee covers various fresh flowers and greens each week, as well as a frog pin and two different types of vases, which are used repeatedly over the five classes.

Each week we learned a different style of Ikebana, and our arrangements followed the design "rules" of that style. Ikebana is technical and structured.

This may sound intimidating, but with Gail guiding us every step of the way, it was much easier than it sounds. Not only were handouts given for information and reference, Gail would teach each style by making her own arrangement in front of us — boy, she made it look so easy — and she was always more than happy to help when needed.

Although just a few stems of flowers and greens are used in Ikebana, the arrangements are stunning and the creative possibilities are endless. I highly recommend this course to all who appreciate the art of floral arranging.

By Cyndi Dumais, Gail Hoar photos



SNOW JOB: Instructors Sally Hens and Karen McNall had no problem finding snow for at least one session of their perennially popular perambulations of local woodland trails, including this one in Leominster State Forest.

GRF photos

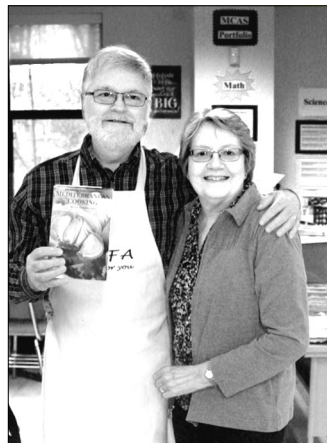


A Feast for the Eyes, Palette

Do you want to be visually stimulated, as well as satiated with dishes from the Mediterranean? Well, that's what 17 of us did, as our chefs held demonstrations with the "how to prepare," peppered with the culture of the region. Then we

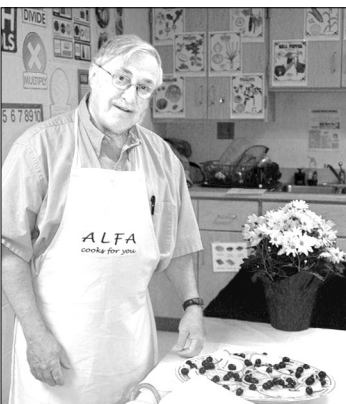
Cooking Mediterranean

sampled the dishes, which included appetizer, entree, drink, and dessert. The emphasis was on fresh food and spices from the land and sea. We did not leave hungry, and we didn't even get our hands dirty, unless you count licking our fingers after the dessert.



Chris and Eileen Barnacoat

Starting with Greek gastronomy with Chris Barnacoat, my favorites were souvlaki, made with lamb, and *kari-thopita* (Greek walnut cake). On to Odette Harvey, who demonstrated making Moroccan chicken with almond couscous. Spanish cuisine with Kathy Flynn didn't include sangria (school rules), but the roasted chicken with chorizo, followed by churro and orange chocolate sauce were delicious. The *involtini di pescespada*, or Sicilian swordfish rolls, and ricotta cake were prepared by Walter Kondig. Last, but not



Walter Konig

least, French cuisine, organized by Bruce Goyette, included tomato soup, *salade niçoise*, and grilled fish, ending with *creme fraiche aux fruits*.

We sailed the Mediterranean with these expert chefs and sous chef, Eileen Barnacoat. We enjoyed watching them perfect their crafty dishes, sharing cultural tidbits about



A surprise in the pot.

each country, and, most of all, we loved savoring the gastronomic delights.

By Kathy Coulson, Gail Hoar photos

Olive Tapenade and Goat Cheese Baguettes

Ingredients:

½ cup chopped red onion
2 tbsp. olive oil
1 cup chopped red pepper
2 tbsp. red wine vinegar
1 jar red roasted peppers chopped
1 baguette
½ cup minced fresh parsley
olive oil for brushing
½ cup chopped kalamata olives
4-6 oz. goat cheese
½ cup chopped Spanish olives

Directions:

In a medium bowl, mix onions, peppers, and olives together. Add vinegar, oil, and parsley and mix until all ingredients are coated. Set aside.

Pre-heat oven to 400 degrees F.

Slice baguette into half-inch slices and place on parchment-lined baking sheet. Toast in oven until lightly golden.

Spread goat cheese on toasted side. Top with a teaspoon of tapenade mix. — **Kathy Flynn**

ALFA: What's It All About?

ALFA, Adult Learning in the Fitchburg Area, offers non-credit daytime classes and special events organized by its member-volunteers in partnership with the professional staff at Fitchburg State University. Each year ALFA presents dozens of classes keyed to a wide variety of interests.

Along with the return of many perennial favorites, courses for fall 2017 include: Introduction to Penny Whistle; Chicago 1968; Review of Supreme Court 2016-17 Term; The Genius of Anton Chekov; All About Drones; Vietnam: A Century of Conflict; Extinction: Is It Inevitable?; Specialty Tea Series; Know Your Antiques; You Can Knit Socks; Great New Short Stories; Indian Summers Season 2; Italian Cooking: Five Regions; Wildlife Sanctuary Walks and Wonders; and more.

Most classes run for 90 minutes over five weeks. While some classes are held at off-campus venues, most are at the McKay Campus. We welcome your suggestions for new courses, programs, and special events.

The idea of creating a local adult learning program originated with Shirley Pick and Dr. Philip Fallon. Enthusiastic support from Dr. Robert Antonucci, then President of FSU, and Dr. Shirley Wagner, then Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, helped make the dream a reality. ALFA is directed by a volunteer Executive Board and advised by Dr. Lisa Moisson.

The community response has been gratifying, with enrollments climbing steadily. A brochure with complete information on fall courses and registration will be available later this summer. For other information, or to be added to ALFA's mailing list, contact the ALFA office in Fitchburg State University's McKay Campus Building C, (978) 665-3706.

Calendar for Fall 2017							
Session 1				Session 2			
	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Sep 2017	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Oct 2017	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
	29	30	31	1	2	3	4
Nov 2017	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	26	27	28	29	30	1	2
Dec 2017	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	10	11	12	13	14	15	16

ALFA Weather Policy

When Fitchburg State University cancels classes or has a delayed opening, ALFA classes will not be held that day. This applies to all ALFA classes, both on the FSU campus and at remote locations.