A Compilation of Information about OLLI and Teaching in OLLI

OLLI Teaching Fellowships

EUEC offers research fellowships in various forms to help foster members' research, and in this same spirit, we would like to support and encourage our members in their teaching. This is a pilot program, and the Executive Committee will evaluate its success after this trial. For this pilot, the rules are fairly simple:

1. Any member is eligible, whether or not the member has taught in OLLI before. However, the course to be taught must be different from courses the member has taught before.
2. Fellowships can be awarded to individuals. Applications from more than one EUEC member are encouraged, and applications from members representing more than one school are particularly encouraged.
3. Each fellowship will be $250, on a per course basis.
4. Applications should be sent to emeriti@emory.edu and should include a list of those teaching the course, a short CV for each teacher, a title and short description of the course, and a brief outline of what will be covered in 8 classes of 1 hour each. A cover letter should outline the experiences and interests of the faculty and how those will contribute to the success of the course, as well as other information that might help the selection committee to evaluate the proposal.
5. Those receiving an award will be designated a 2014 EUEC-OLLI Teaching Fellow.
6. Applications will start being evaluated on October 6, but will be accepted after that date.

There is enormous talent in EUEC and many of you could offer courses that those in OLLI would be eager to take. I encourage you to think creatively about what you might offer, and read the other articles in this newsletter about OLLI.

Who is OLLI contd.

I was not alone in the lack of knowledge about OLLI. Earlier this year I conducted a survey of recently retired faculty and nearly a third of them had also not heard of OLLI. Emory’s program is one of 119 programs throughout the U.S. endowed by the Osher Institute. Click to read about OLLI: Osher Website. On their website is found the following:

There is considerable variation among the Osher Institutes but the common threads remain: non-credit educational programs specifically developed for seasoned adults who are aged 50 and older; university connection and university support; robust volunteer leadership and sound organizational structure; and a diverse repertoire of intellectually stimulating courses. The designation of each grantee as "The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of X" is a condition of the Foundation's grant-making as is the use of a logo which consists of a simple circle with the words "Osher Lifelong Learning Institute" arranged within.

John Bugge and I have had several conversations with OLLI leadership. There are several reasons we believe that a much stronger relationship between EUEC and OLLI is warranted:

1) OLLI is a part of Emory--included under ECE, Emory Continuing Education. Thus helping strengthen OLLI is one way of helping Emory University.

2) OLLI is very interested in making major expansions in courses. EUEC represents a tremendous resource for providing intellectually stimulating courses, and the OLLI Curriculum Committee is extremely interested in having greater participation of EUEC members in teaching.

3) More OLLI courses will in turn provide a greater choice of courses for EUEC members to take.
How can I help OLLI?

There are several ways that EUEC members can help OLLI:

- **Teach!** This is a real opportunity to think creatively about teaching. The course you teach doesn't have to be in your vocational subject—it can be in one of your side passions. Your students will not have to take a standardized test at the end of the course so you don't have to teach a certain curriculum. You also don't have to teach by yourself. This is a great opportunity to offer interdisciplinary courses. There are many topics of interest that span multiple disciplines and could be a way of getting to know EUEC members in other schools. Read the article elsewhere in this issue about OLLI teaching fellowships.

- **Tell your friends and neighbors about OLLI.** OLLI is trying to expand its reach, and in order to get a second endowment from the Osher Institute needs to have at least 1000 members. They are at present several hundred from that goal.

- **Take OLLI courses.** The fall course catalog is now available here.

- **Volunteer for one of the OLLI committees.** Pat Miller (not our Pat Miller!) is the dynamic volunteer leader who has developed a plan to take OLLI to the next level of quality and activity. There are four committees of volunteers: Curriculum; two "growth committees," fundraising and endowment; membership and volunteer recruitment; and a hospitality and event-planning committee. Your participation on any of the committees would be welcome.

Teaching at OLLI

As explained elsewhere in this newsletter, I believe EUEC members can contribute even more to OLLI teaching. There are eight EUEC members who have taught OLLI courses (Herb Benario, John Bugge, George de Man, Dorothy Fletcher, Trudy Kretchman, Stephen Margolis, Clark Poling, Michael Zeiler). There are many more EUEC members who could offer intellectually stimulating courses, and to spur that development, EUEC is going to offer OLLI Teaching Fellowships.

**What course should I teach?**

Some of you have taught courses that with adaptation could be of interest to the OLLI audience. Others may not have taught courses at all, or may have taught only advanced courses of interest to a specialist audience. This is a chance to be creative! OLLI is interested in having faculty who teach their passion, even if that is not what they taught for a salary. Many of the pressing issues of today are inherently interdisciplinary and involve a combination of knowledge that very few individuals would possess (healthcare politics; healthcare ethics; climate change; all sorts of ethical issues [the Emory Center for Ethics taught a course in the Senior University at Mercer (!) that covered a wide range of ethics and involved 6 different faculty]; and many other areas that I am sure you could name). Some of the people on the OLLI Curriculum Committee did some brainstorming and came up with topics that they thought would be of interest. You can see those suggestions by clicking here, but the list is by no means exhaustive. If you are interested in getting together with other EUEC members to teach a course, but are unsure exactly what to teach or whom to teach with, click on EUEC-Courses to send an email stating your interest and asking for volunteers to teach with you.

**At what level should I aim the course?**

In general, the best advice is to plan the course as if you were teaching EUEC members not in your own area of expertise. You can read about EUEC members' experiences in teaching OLLI classes below and one theme is that of engaged and intelligent learners. OLLI students, after all, are paying their own money to take classes because they are interested in them and not because they want an A so they can go to medical school. Most OLLI students want to be challenged.
What is it like to teach an OLLI course?

Here are experiences from four of our members who have taught in OLLI:

From John Bugge:

And gladly wolde he . . . teche at OLLI

One day at the end of my class on Chaucer's *Miller's Tale*, one of my OLLI students, a gentleman of about my own vintage, came up and asked me if I'd actually conducted myself with undergraduates the way I'd done with his fellow seniors that day. I assured him I had, but I was puzzled by what he might have meant by the question. Was he alluding to my insistence that students read the poetry in the original Middle English, or (more likely), was he abashed to suspect that I had so freely conversed with undergraduates, too, about *The Miller's Tale's* notorious dirty bits? (Yes, to both questions, by the way.)

This was during the first of the four courses I have taught at OLLI in my specialty of medieval English literature, and the encounter was symptomatic of the odd dislocations one experiences when making the switch to a student population of one's own generational cohort. And I'm pleased to be able to say that there are a number of unexpected felicities that come with an over-50 student body.

For one thing, these people are all hungry for what you have to say, happy to be in your class, and enthusiastic about learning something new. The old bromide about how "Education is wasted on the young" was never entirely fair, but you're inclined see the larger truth behind it when you see how little of what you have to say in class escapes this group of elders. Furthermore, they are better than undergraduates in one significant respect: each comes to class armed with decades of the sort of life-experience that makes what the humanities and social sciences have to say about the human condition that much more accessible. (It doesn't hurt, either, that, as my near-contemporaries, they get my often very dated jokes.) Third, while a few sometimes didn't manage to do all the reading I'd assigned, I found that many went beyond the assignment and brought in extra material they'd researched on their own. Finally, and paradoxically, the ambiance in an OLLI class feels a lot more collegial than in a "college" class, for there's a more palpable sense of a shared intellectual enterprise when one is, as the instructor, only *primus inter pares*.

Still, it's not a perfect pedagogical situation. Sometimes you feel the students, especially those who haven't done the reading, are there just to be entertained - your lecture as performance. Moreover, even the apparently best prepared among them are not accustomed to the Socratic method; they were often uncomfortable when I'd ask a question in class, and they could be as timid about speaking up as any lowly freshman. And, since there are no tests or grades, you don't have any way to pressure them to get more deeply engaged. Maybe that's a good thing, of course, but it makes for a quite different classroom dynamic than one is used to. You might think that since these students are paying customers, they would be more assertive about getting their money's worth. But, then again, they don't pay all that much! The hour I spent on *The Miller's Tale* set each student back about $3.75 at the going rate then. The issue is not that I didn't see a penny of this myself (at the moment nearly all OLLI teachers are unpaid); it's that, paying less than what they would to park for an hour at Emory Hospital, OLLI students are perhaps not persuaded to see their hour in class as especially valuable.

But even without an honorarium - and this may change with more active participation by members of the Emeritus College - the experience of teaching bestows genuine spiritual value on those who do it. One benefit is simply the reward of teaching something that you know "cold": frankly, it's good for one's ego to be the expert again; retired academics need this blandishment as much as any other kind of retiree. But there is an autobiographical dimension as well: as a teacher you derive great satisfaction in revealing to others the professional concerns that have defined your life's work as an academic. You get to demonstrate why you chose to study what you did and to explain why it's so important that others understand your field the way you do. It's a worthy endeavor, and I hope that my colleagues in the Emeritus College will consider offering a
course or two at OLLI as an important contribution to furthering the continued life of the mind among our membership.

From **Clark Poling:**

Last fall (2013) I taught a course for Emory's OLLI program, titled "Matisse and Picasso: A Rivalry." The subject must have struck a nerve favorably, since a lot of people signed up and some were turned away because the room wouldn't accommodate them. The students were very engaged, the staff offered good support, and I enjoyed the experience very much. I taught from PowerPoint presentations of digital images. Because of the size of the class, I mostly lectured, though there was some discussion based on texts by the two artists, and there were interesting observations and questions from the students. The course met one hour a week for six weeks.

I live in Oakland, CA, and was in Atlanta for only a few months, and I liked the opportunity to get a sense of the OLLI community at Emory and to contribute to it. I've taught in OLLI programs at the University of California, Berkeley, and at San Francisco State University, where the courses typically meet for two hours at a time, for six weeks. This schedule allows for a fuller offering of the course material, of course, but I found Emory OLLI's schedule adequate for presenting my subject.

Clark Poling  
Professor Emeritus, Art History

From **Dorothy Fletcher**

My husband, Bill, and I taught a course on Persian Miniatures in the winter term (Jan.-Mar.) this year. I had just retired from 45 years of teaching the previous August and Bill was coming back to teaching after a 40-year hiatus and a different career.

We found it to be a wonderful experience. The class enrollment started out with a surprisingly large roster of 27 people. This settled down to a regular attendance of 12-15. This group was comprised of people with an artistic background: artists, interior decorators, museum docents, and collectors, as well as people who had travelled to Iran or were of Iranian background. There was one very alert participant who was there just because a neighbor recommended the course. One of the joys, contrary to Emory experience, was that no one was buried in a laptop. They all paid attention and asked lots of good questions. They even applauded at the end of most sessions! The course evaluations were very gratifying. Some participants said they were there because they had been to the new Islamic Galleries at the Metropolitan Museum and wanted to know more. Others said they would visit the museum as a result of the course.

We got off to a bit of a rough start because the Executive Park facility was brand new and not all the technical kinks had been worked out. But we soon found a system that worked and had no further problems. Another installment of this course may be ready by January.

Dorothy Fletcher  
Senior Lecturer Emerita, Art History
From Herb Benario

I have taught in the OLLI program since 2006, focusing upon presenting courses on Latin literature and Roman history. Some of my subjects have been Vergil's *Aeneid*, the Emperor Augustus, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Roman Women, and Fictional History, Historical Fiction. In one year I taught two courses on Jane Austen. I always enjoy talking about the classical field which has been part of my life for more than seventy years, and the people who have attended my classes are very nice. Their educational background is comparable to my own, regardless of field, and, unlike so many students of the last thirty years, they know who Churchill was if I mention him.

The classes are old-fashioned. Most of the time I talk, the others listen. I do not use a computer, I prefer to have a handout for each class which every person can take home. Quite a few people have taken just about every course which I have offered, and I rejoice to be able to call them friends.

The time span in which the course appears becomes the high point of my retirement leisure. I enjoy it all, and recommend participation in the program to others. Even in our sere years it is a source of pleasure to gain new enthusiasts for subjects to which we have devoted our lives.

Herbert W. Benario
Professor Emeritus of Classics