

B.I.L.L. BOARD

Newsletter of the Berkshire Institute For Lifetime Learning
Spring 2000 • Volume 8 • Number 3

Spring 2000 Semester at a Glance

The Curriculum Committee has put together a stimulating array of courses and lecturers for the spring 2000 semester. Sixteen courses will be offered at several locations: BCC Pittsfield and Great Barrington campuses, Williams College, the Clark Art Institute, and the Berkshire Athenaeum. Something for everyone!

You have already received the catalog and registration information. If you have not registered, do so now. Courses start April 10 and run through May 31. Refer to the catalog for exact times and dates. The courses and locations are:

MONDAYS (BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield)

Stories of a Lifetime: Writing Memoirs

*Challenging Times in Egypt: Pharaohs and the Climate
Stress and Disease*

TUESDAYS (Berkshire Athenaeum, Bartlett Avenue, Pittsfield)

Today's Headlines: News of the Week

Five Poets

Thoughts on Thinking II: The Biology of the Brain

WEDNESDAYS (BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield)

Plato's Republic: An Introduction to Western Philosophy

Britain Since 1945

Great Books/Great Films

THURSDAYS (Williamstown)

Biography I: They Changed Our Lives (Williams College Faculty House)

The Eyes Have It, Part II: Visual Exploration at the Clark (Clark Art Institute)

From Antarctica to the Galapagos Islands (Clark Art Institute)

FRIDAYS (BCC Main Campus, Pittsfield)

Lobbying: The Art of Politics

FRIDAYS (BCC South Campus, Great Barrington)

Short Story Seminar

Conservation in the Wild West of Massachusetts

FRIDAYS (Williams College Museum, Williamstown)

Art and Society in Japan

Great Books/Great Films

This exciting new course, offered this spring, will examine and discuss three literary works made into memorable movies and presented in the following order: *Great Expectations*, *Howard's End*, and *All the King's Men*.

Two weeks will be devoted to each work. The movie will be shown one week; the book discussion will take place the following week. Elliott Vines will moderate the film presentations. Bob Chandler, Lenore Rubin, and Jack Stern will lead the book discussions.

— Elliott Vines

Special Events to Come

Hold these dates and watch your mail for flyers.

MARCH 28

Jazz lecture and preview of Williams Jazz Festival at the Clark Art Institute

APRIL 4

Trip to New York City: The Museum of Television and Radio and the Metropolitan Opera House (a back-stage tour)

MAY 16

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, Connecticut

JUNE 10

Ragtime, Broadway's hit musical, Proctor's Theater, Schenectady, New York

JUNE 20

The Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute in Utica, New York, and a stop at The Canajoharie Library



Poplar Walk by Charles Burchfield, from the exhibit of American Twentieth-Century Watercolors at the Munson-Williams-Proctor Arts Institute

President's Letter

This is my first message to you in the new millennium, and I want to wish all of you and your families a healthy and happy New Year.

I am writing this in December, and it's just starting to get chilly outside. The weather is gray and overcast; a usual early Berkshire winter before snow clears the air.

B.I.L.L. committee members have been pondering about a request from Elderhostel to increase our dues structure to make the main LIR (Learning in Retirement) office in Boston self-sufficient from Elderhostel's financial support. We are indebted to the central office for the help they have given us in our startup although the growth of B.I.L.L. has truly been local. Do we have a responsibility for starting up other groups similar to B.I.L.L.? And specifically, at what cost to us?

The Board is responsible not only for policy-making decisions, but addresses issues such as these. We are involved in meetings and discussions concerning these questions. Art Sherman, Ann Dulye, Jack Rubin, and Arline Breskin are helping to lead us to the decision best for B.I.L.L. Your comments are welcome.

Norman Arnet

Is Our Face Red!

Two lecturers, who are also B.I.L.L. members, Mort Levy and Julie Lowell, were omitted from our "Thank You, Lecturers" article in the Winter '99/2000 newsletter. Our apologies to Mort and Julie for the oversight.

In the "Getting to Know You" article profiling Ilse Browner, we should have noted that Ellie Sack became Curriculum Chair after Ilse's term was completed. Ilse took over again during Ellie's leave of absence.

— Wilma Michaels, Editor

Huge Response to the Membership Survey

Over 300 completed surveys have been received, coded and entered into B.I.L.L.'s database. If you have not yet done so, please complete the survey and return it to the office. If you need to obtain a copy of the survey, call the office 499-4660 Ext. 456.

Loet Velmans and Bob Chandler developed the survey form. The detailed job of entering the data in a useful, easily accessible format was handled professionally by Sharon Mack, our office administrator, and Bonnie Desrosiers, office staff volunteer.

Data about member interests and background, comments about courses, special events and other issues are only now beginning to provide a wealth of information for the chairs of the various B.I.L.L. committees and officers. The obvious depth and quality of member resources is clearly evident from a review of the information and will be very helpful, as we hoped it would be, in bringing to bear our full capabilities to sustain the rapid growth of B.I.L.L. in the future.

— Art Sherman

Egypt in Boston

On Wednesday, December 8, two buses transporting 86 B.I.L.L. members became flying carpets to set the stage for an inspiring day of Egypt in Boston. On the bus, two videos were shown which familiarized us about the exhibits we would see at the Museum of Fine Arts.

Our first stop was at the Museum of Science where we viewed the film, *Mysteries of Egypt*, a National Geographic production, in the IMAX Theater. A buffet lunch was served for B.I.L.L. members in a private dining room overlooking the Charles River. The hospitality of the Museum staff was impressive.



The afternoon program at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, *Pharaohs of the Sun: Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamen* included exhibits of monumental rare pieces and premier Egyptian treasures from the Amarna Age when the throne of Egypt was at its peak of imperial glory. Truly a dazzling experience with complete audio commentary which presented a comprehensive study to this important period in Egyptian history.

The Special Events Committee planned this trip as an outgrowth of the two semesters of Egyptian lectures by Dr. Lenore Congdon. Furthermore, a group of 20 B.I.L.L. members will leave in February for two weeks to visit Egypt on the Nile from Cairo to Aswan with all the mysteries and beauty of a civilization that holds its visitors in awe. The rounded B.I.L.L. programs of lectures and field trips that have been so successful will continue.

—Ann Dulye

Thank You, Quality Inn

B.I.L.L. thanks the management of the Quality Inn, located on Route 7 in Lenox, for providing us with an ideal location for winter programs, for its welcoming hospitality, accessible parking, and comfortable warm classrooms.

B.I.L.L. BOARD

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Letters to the Editor

To the B.I.L.L.BOARD Editor:

With the New Year approaching, I felt it time to express my appreciation to B.I.L.L. for the stimulating courses it has offered me since its inception. In fact, I attribute my longevity (91 ³/₄ years) partly to the excitement of learning that B.I.L.L. offers. The new friendships and the remarkable people I've met in those courses have made my life so much more enjoyable.

My prescription, therefore, for a long life is to take advantage of what our great organization, B.I.L.L., gives. I thank B.C.C. and Williams for providing the knowledgeable and interesting lecturers. I also think I speak for all the participants in wishing the best for everybody connected with B.I.L.L. and for the continued great accomplishments of this organization in the new millennium.

— Gertrude R. Knepper

Dear B.I.L.L.BOARD Editor:

I have been attending B.I.L.L. courses for the past four years. I am a Pittsfield native, a former G.E. employee, and a retiree from the U.S. Postal Service after 45 years of service. I am a World War II veteran having served in the Army Medical Department in England.

My medical history includes a knee replacement and three heart attacks. As a matter of fact, my last heart attack occurred during a "Headlines" course at BCC. Thanks to the immediate assistance of Dr. Norman Avnet and Oscar Shreefter, also class members, I survived.

I continue participating in the B.I.L.L. programs taking courses in law, history, psychology, current events, and "The Magic of the Berkshires."

My thanks to B.I.L.L. and all those involved with providing wonderful courses to the community. I love the B.I.L.L. curriculum. — John Stanton

Getting to Know You

PAUL STEIN

Paul retired from his position as Professor of English at SUNY, Geneseo, a faculty position he held for 17 years, prior to retiring and moving to the Berkshires. He was chairman of the department at one point.

Paul was one of the founding members of B.I.L.L. and has conducted courses analyzing literature, which have proven to be incredibly popular. Indeed, one class member who attended his lecture on Kafka found it "thrilling and unforgettable."

Paul is one of the most interesting members of B.I.L.L. In his youth, he was a serious reader of literature. As an adult, he enrolled in a business program at the City College of New York and trained as an accountant, a



profession he practiced very successfully in the textile industry but with little passion. One day, while having lunch in a cafeteria full of college students talking about their studies, Paul experienced an epiphany. He stated, "I suddenly knew then that what I really wanted was to immerse myself in a college environment and teach literature. I

then changed the direction of my life and obtained a Masters degree and then a Doctorate in English. It wasn't easy because at the time I was married and bringing up a growing family. My wife thought I was crazy but went along with me." The rest is history.

We are indeed fortunate to have Paul in our midst.

— Karl Easton

Membership Demographics

A look at B.I.L.L.'s membership demographics in early October 1999 revealed interesting statistics.

Our membership of 766 reflects a 16 percent increase for the past year. Our 91 percent annual membership renewal rate significantly exceeds the national average of 80 percent for similar learning institutes. Ninety-five percent of our members reside in Berkshire County with the greatest concentration in Pittsfield, Lenox, Great Barrington, Lee, and Stockbridge. The remainder reside in New York, Connecticut, and Vermont. The greatest increase on a percentage basis was from residents of Lee. While 26 percent of our members have dual residences, the greatest growth was for year-round residents. There are 262 male members and 504 female members.

Members enrolled in significantly more courses than the previous year. Some members took multiple courses and in several instances up to seven.

The past year was a bullish year for B.I.L.L. and certainly attests to our filling an expanded educational need in our community.

— Len Stolberg

Think Spring!

New Year's Brunch 2000

A great start to the new millennium! B.I.L.L. members and guests (children and grandchildren) enjoyed the delightful presentation of food and wonderful entertainment at the Pittsfield Country Club.



Friends!

Family!



Photos by Norman Avnet and Wilma Michaels



Food!



Entertainment!



Fun!



"Johnny the Joker"



MISBEHAVIN'

The Media Project/Take Two

"Newspapermen meet such interesting people...." Surely, Pete Seeger's song, the theme song of WAMC's Media Project, can refer to the more than 100 B.I.L.L. members and their guests who attended the show's taping at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Pittsfield on Friday, December 10. The broadcast was aired on Monday, December 13, at 3 p.m.

Introduced by event chair Elliott Vines, moderator Alan Chartock and panelists David Scribner and Clarence Fanto, editor and managing editor respectively of *The Berkshire Eagle*, engaged in a lively discussion about many issues confronting the media today including conflicts of interest and personal biases.

An equally lively question and answer period followed the taping. A delightful brunch concluded the event. B.I.L.L. hopes to be able to offer the Media Project as an annual Special Event.

— Elliott Vines



Clarence Fanto, Alan Chartock, and David Scribner

Fall '99 Lecturers Have Their Say...

From John Brooks, Clark Art Institute (*The Eyes Have It: Looking at the Clark Art Institute and Its Collections*)

"Since this was the third running of 'The Eyes Have It,' it was most helpful to have some experience behind me. Stimulating, enlightening, diverse are words I would use to describe my reaction to the responses and feedback from participants. I only hope that the group discussions and activities allowed everyone to feel comfortable with both the creative and analytical experiences in appreciating art."

From Paul Flaum (*The Twentieth Century*)

"Having taught B.I.L.L. courses for four years, I find that I must be exceedingly well prepared because the people who take these courses are exceptionally knowledgeable. I learn as much as the students in my classes. It is a special experience to be teaching friends since I know so many B.I.L.L. members personally."

From Phyllis Jaffe (*Chekhov and the Art of Suffering*)

"This teacher's dream is answered when the privilege of lecturing to a B.I.L.L. audience occurs. Rapt attention, intelligent questions, and smiling faces are the ingredients I have experienced as I stand in front of the gathered group. I love the entire process and hope to continue, if asked, for many years."

From Henry R. Rodman, Ph.D. (*American Architecture: Styles, Influences and Developments*)

"Teaching at the spectrum of Lifetime Learning was a challenging and new experience. Working with individuals whose breadth of knowledge, backgrounds, and curiosity were so varied that immediate response on my part was demanding yet stimulating in awakening to and acknowledging the views and concerns of the participants."

From Cesar E. Silva, Ph.D. (*Chaos and Fractals: The New Science of Patterns in Nature*)

"Last fall I had a most inquisitive and appreciative audience for the six lectures I gave. I was much impressed by the thirst for knowledge from the members of the class and by the demanding questions that sought to penetrate beyond the initial explanations. It was a fun and rewarding semester indeed."

Annual Meeting and Convocation Scheduled

The Annual Open Meeting will take place on Wednesday, May 31, 2000, at 1:30 p.m. in the Roussevitzky Arts Center, the Robert M. Boland Theatre, at BCC. Dr. Barbara Viniar, president of Berkshire Community College, will be the guest speaker.

Watch your mail for more information.

Membership Committee Update

Our Committee's purpose is the recruitment and, more importantly, the retention of members. One of our mandates is to reach out to the community so that it learns about B.I.L.L.'s activities. Hospitality and staffing receptions are also part of what we do.

B.I.L.L.'s strength lies in the wealth of human resources of our more than 750 members. Our Committee has worked with members of the Board to develop a survey of member profiles that will provide us with potential participants who can serve as lecturers, committee members, future officers, and committee chairs of the organization. This survey, which you recently received, will give us a better sense of our members' interests and experiences so that we may all benefit from the tremendous talent around us. We can then make the best use of their abilities and best reflect their needs in curriculum development.

The Membership Committee welcomes volunteers. This is a wonderful opportunity to get involved and to meet new people.

— Barbara Caplin,
Membership Committee Chair

Catalog Committee Needs Your Help!

Would you like to become involved in the preparation of the Catalog? Please call Elske Smith, chair of the Curriculum Committee at (413) 637-2106 or Ilse Browner at (413) 637-1624 to find out how you can assist.

Are you leaving town? Call the B.I.L.L. office and let Sharon know.

Buck Rogers or Us in the 21st Century?

We begin a century that will see technology advance at such a rapid, deep, broad pace that our political, social, legal, and religious fabric will be challenged as never before in human history. Here are only a few of the changes that I find intriguing.

Current great mysteries of cosmology, such as the creation, evolution, and the future of the universe will yield to rational explanation. Huge, new, extremely powerful, very sophisticated telescopes will probe far into the past across the full energy spectrum from both earth and space. Exploration for possible habitable planets throughout the universe will yield positive results.

Very sophisticated nuclear particle experiments will resolve the behavior of the elemental forces of nature, possibly leading to development of new forms of usable energy.

Computing and communication capabilities will be at very high speeds, very personal, and all pervasive. Information will cut across geographic boundaries, economic status, work, leisure, night and day.

Commerce, finance, manufacturing, and services will become very focused on individual needs yet will network seamlessly. The capacity to simulate human actions through computer graphics will lead to new concepts of entertainment, and a high degree of integration of humans and machines. The deployment of androids and broader use of robotics is likely.

Genetic engineering will considerably extend human life through development of new treatments for heretofore difficult illnesses, growth of replacement parts, and a successful fundamental attack on the aging process itself. The ability to alter plant and animal species will expand food supplies dramatically. Concepts of family life and planning and reproduction will be impacted.

Humans will travel through the inner solar system to various space stations, the Moon, and Mars. Exploration of the intriguing moons of Jupiter and Saturn will proceed as well. Current experimental liquid hydrogen fueled vehicles will evolve into large passenger aircraft traveling

around the Earth and into orbit in single stage at speeds as high as Mach 20.

Fuel cell powered self-guiding vehicles will replace the internal combustion powered automobile. Development of fusion and economic solar power will significantly affect the environment. Climatic changes caused by release of suboceanic frozen methane will be better understood, perhaps controlled, and provide new energy resources. New materials created by artificially stitching together atoms will enable the creation of remarkable structures of both huge size and complex microelectro mechanical devices.

The resulting economic, social, legal, and environmental impacts of these and other vast changes taking place across the entire panoply of human activity will shake the world and alter the role of governments, citizens, corporations, and nation states. For all the uncertainty today, it would be exciting to see what actually happens. I think it will be for the good.

— Art Sherman

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