

Albion Area Lifelong Learners

AN INSTITUTE FOR ADULT LEARNING IN COOPERATION WITH ALBION COLLEGE

Greetings

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our Spring Term with many events happening with AALL.

Our Spring Assembly, April 11, features Dr. Demian Cho who will amaze us with the latest developments in AI (artificial intelligence).

The Spring Assembly is also the time for our General Membership Meeting. We need to elect three new members to the Board.

The Board, thanks to Ginny Garrison, has planned two outings: Dinner/Theatre at Albion College on April 18. A trip to Air Zoo, in Portage, with lunch is planned for June 4. See details on a later page of this Newsletter.

Curriculum Committee has planned another selection of excellent classes for the Spring Term, starting on April 29.

Finally, it is with mixed feelings that I write my last note to you. After many years of serving on various committees and boards of AALL, including President, my time to retire from leadership has come to an end. It has been a privilege to work with all of you in this unique organization. I look forward to attending classes and special outings where I will see you again and again.

Mary Slater, President

Upcoming Events

Spring Assembly

The Age of the Learned Machine

Thursday, April 11, 2024, 10 a.m.

Tennant Hall at the First United Methodist Church
600 E Michigan Ave, Albion, MI 49224

We are at the beginning of arguably the most dramatic period in human history, the age of AI. We have already seen machines that drive cars, diagnose cancers, translate languages, design houses, create art, beat humans in arguably the most complex game..., you name it. This revolution, which started with a rather esoteric branch of machine learning technology called deep learning, is more than a technological leap but may have far-reaching implications for the future of humanity. In this short talk, I will explain the scientific principle behind deep learning technology, which is rooted in how our brain works, with a few examples from current and possible future technology.

Growing up in Seoul, Korea, Demian was introduced to physics by reading an article by a well-known gravitational physicist, Bryce DeWitt. The implication of quantum theory on the fundamental structure of spacetime – spacetime bubbles – fascinated him.

He eventually earned a B.S. and Ph.D. in physics from the University of Texas at Austin (where Dr. DeWitt was) and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. After a post-doctoral stint at Raman Research Institute in Bangalore, India, he taught at the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Kenyon College, then, Saint Mary's University of Minnesota before came to Albion College in 2021.

He was trained as a theoretical gravitational physicist. He worked on various problems, from gravitational radiation reactions to quantum field theory on curved spacetime to quantum gravity in a higher-dimensional universe. His recent research focus, however, is computational neuroscience. AlphaGo beating Sedol Lee, the best Go-player in the world at the time, convinced him of the fascinating possibility of general AI. He is currently collaborating with colleagues from Indiana University, Bloomington, on information processing in the cerebral cortex and the critical state of the brain. He is also interested in how efficiency in information processing and energy consumption can constrain the modular structure of brains.

He is still thinking hard about his childhood problem, though. Recently, there have been some fascinating works from the foundations of quantum theory and quantum information science on the possibility of an indefinite causal structure. That is, cause and effect are not absolute. This opens up a possible evasion of Stephen Hawking's chronology protection conjecture – quantum theory prohibits the universe from having the possibility of time travel. He is still learning and digesting, but thinking about these abstract questions has been fun.

When he is not in his office looking at a computer screen, you can find him in the chapel's basement trying to learn to play piano.

Dinner Theatre

Thursday, April 18, we will gather for dinner in a reserved section of Baldwin Hall around 6 p.m. The price of a meal there is approximately \$10. There is an elevator just inside the main entrance. After dinner we will walk over to Herrick Theatre to see Twelfth Night, which begins at 7:30 p.m. The theatre cost is free. Please sign up at Assembly, or email Ginny Garrison at briton1974@yahoo.com. We just need an estimate of how many will be attending.

Group Trip

On Tuesday, June 4, we will make a visit to the Air Zoo in Portage, MI. We will gather at the parking lot by Tractor Supply at 10 a.m. and car pool. Of course, you may set up car pools on your own, we will lunch at the Cove Lakeside Bistro, 91109 Portage Rd., 269-350-5380. There are several lunch options \$15 and under. The menu is on line. This is a lakeside restaurant, and if the weather is nice, we can lunch on the outside deck. Inside dining is also available. After lunch, we will take a short drive to the Air Zoo, 6151 Portage Rd., 269-382-6555, where we will have a guided tour. Reservations are required. Sign up at Assembly or contact Ginny Garrison at briton1974@yahoo.com.

Upcoming Courses

Divided Loyalty in the American Revolution

Mark Crawford, BA Albion College 1978, Retired hospital administrator

Mondays, 2 – 4 p.m. April 29, May 6, 13, 20. In person. Class size unlimited. Location and Room Numbers will be given with course confirmations.

Join in this unique opportunity to examine the American Revolution through the lens of the author's historical fiction novel, *Divided Loyalty: Four Sons of the Revolution*. Retired Albion College graduate Mark Crawford will share a bit about the research and writing, publishing, and reaction to his first book. Class sessions will follow the story of *Divided Loyalty*, examine three popular myths about the American Revolution, and engage in conversation about the 250 years of U.S. independence.

This class will draw information and ideas from Crawford's novel *Divided Loyalty: Four Sons of the Revolution*. Weekly discussion will focus on assigned chapters. It is designed for students to read chapters in advance; however the lecture and conversation should be interesting even for those who are not engaged in the book. *Divided Loyalty* is available on Amazon and Kindle and at some local libraries.

Woodworking—minus the wood and the work

Jim Whitehouse (plus four area woodworkers), Hobbyist and Woodworker.

Wednesdays, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. May 1, 8, 15, 22. In person. Class size unlimited. Location and Room Numbers will be given with course confirmations.

This class will NOT be building birdhouses, charcuterie boards or cribbage boards. Instead, we'll be covering topics including but not limited to:

- Getting started
- Choosing a project, from birdhouses to beds to home improvement
- Designing your project, from Shaker to Victorian
- Tools, from simple to complex, from inexpensive to pricey
- Shop space, organization and dust control
- Gathering materials, including wood

- Preparing the wood
- Preparing your tools, a/k/a sharpening, adjusting, maintenance
- Construction techniques
- Finishes, including sanding, painting, staining and varnishing, wax, and oils
- Shop safety
- Fixing mistakes

Class sessions will include demonstrations, examples of projects by local woodworkers, photos, resources, and plenty of stories about mistakes. In addition to general topics covered by Jim Whitehouse, special presentations will be made by:

- Neil Starkey — toys and boxes
- Ron Fryxell — home improvement projects
- Doug White — Shaker furniture
- Jim Whitehouse — Arts & Crafts style furniture
- Andy French — Cutting curves, bandsaw projects

The Life and Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright

Scott Stephen, Chief Information Officer Emeritus, Albion College.

Wednesdays, 2 — 4 p.m., May 1, 8, 22, 29. In person. Class size unlimited. Location and Room Numbers will be given with course confirmations.

A popular story reports that Frank Lloyd Wright was once asked in court to state his profession, and he replied, “I am the greatest architect in the world.” The lawyer asked him if he was sure about that, and he stated, “Well, I AM under oath!”

Whether we agree or not, we cannot deny that Wright is responsible for a remarkable body of work. His private homes and public buildings challenged Victorian traditions, bringing new ideas to the art of architecture. We will start the course with a look at Mr. Wright’s life history beginning with his Welsh roots, his early years in Wisconsin, and his work experience as a draftsman and then architect in Chicago. We’ll follow the intricate path of his family and romantic life, and then his years leading the Taliesin Fellowship at his home Taliesin, near Spring Green, Wisconsin, and at Taliesin West in Scottsdale, Arizona.

We will look at Wright’s architecture from several perspectives, using photographs of his work from a number of sources, including the instructor’s own photographs. We’ll start

out with Wright's own homes in Oak Park, Illinois, Spring Green, and Scottsdale. Then we'll see a variety of his work located nearby in Michigan, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Then we'll broaden the view to look at additional sites that were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage site list in 2019. We'll also highlight sites that are open to the public across the country, and those that can be rented for overnight stays. And if there is time, we'll look at some recently created virtual tours of lost constructions and unbuilt designs.

Religions: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism

Ron Mourad, Professor of Religious Studies, Albion College.

Thursdays, 10 a.m. — 12 p.m., May 2, 9, 16, 23. In person. Class size unlimited. Location and Room Numbers will be given with course confirmations.

Can more than one religion be true? Can more than one lead to salvation? What if different religions promise different salvations? This class will explore three classic positions on these questions: exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism. We will read one book chapter per week to ground our discussions, which will be selected from Mark Heim's *Salvations: Truth and Difference in Religion* and Paul Griffiths's *Problems of Religious Diversity*.

Course materials will be supplied by the instructor.

Seeing Birds

Dale Kennedy and Doug White, Albion College Biology Department Emeriti.

Thursdays, 2 – 4:00 pm, May 2, 9, 23, 30 Bohm Theatre and May 16 Whitehouse Nature Center. In person. Class size unlimited.

This course will explore the various ways people relate to wild birds through a series of films and documentaries presented in the Bohm. It includes a guided bird walk in the Whitehouse Nature Center.

The screenings will include:

- Week 1: *The Birds*. In this Alfred Hitchcock film from 1963, nature in the form of birds famously exacts revenge for the mistreatment of the female characters.

- Week 2: Birders, the Central Park effect (2012) and My Life as a Turkey (2011). These documentaries show, respectively, the transformative power of urban bird watching, and the astounding insights gained from “parenting” wild turkeys.
- Week 3: Meet at Whitehouse Nature Center for a bird walk.
- Week 4: The Big Year (2011). This comic drama based on a non-fiction book exposes obsessive, competitive “birding.”
- Week 5: Winged Migration (2001). In this lyrical film the audience joins migrating birds in flight.

Links to short articles and videos will be provided to give context and relevance to the films.

There is a \$10 charge to help cover the cost of the theatre rental.

Reminders for Spring 2024:

Annual membership dues for 2024-2025 are \$25. Members may take one class each term without additional fee; each additional class is \$10. If you have questions, you can call the Registrar, Mary Deardurff at 517-990-4158.

The Spring Assembly (on Thursday, April 11, 2024) will be held in Tennant Hall at the First United Methodist Church. You may register in person from 9:30 to 10 a.m. Please bring your completed registration form (or facsimile) with you.

Mail-in registration forms (along with a check or money order made out to AALL) must be received by Thursday, April 18, 2024. Mail the completed form along with a check or money order payable to AALL to: AALL Registrar, P. O. Box 188, Albion, MI 49224

Registration Information

For each course for which you want to register, place a number in the box in front of the course name: 1 for the course you most want to take, 2 for the second course you wish to take, etc. (NOTE: If you only wish to take one course, mark it with the number 1)

If you wish to indicate an alternate choice (in case one of your choices is oversubscribed and you are not admitted to that course), mark an X in the box before your alternate choice.

In the column marked FEE, indicate the appropriate cost. The first course (each term) is free with your AALL membership; simply write FREE in the FEE column. Each additional course is \$10 (plus any special fees). All fees need to be paid at the time of registration. If your "free class" is one that requires a fee, you must pay the fee even though the class is free for you.

If you are unable to attend a course for which you have registered, fees can be refunded until the start of the course.

Policy for Limited Enrollment Classes

When a course with limited enrollment is over-enrolled, the names of all those who listed as in #1 shall be entered in a lottery. Those randomly drawn shall be placed in the class. Those not selected will be put on a waiting list and will be given first access if that course is offered again. The Registrar will keep a record of those on the waiting list until the course is offered again.

Those selected for the course in its first offering will not be eligible to retake it until all those on the waiting list have had the opportunity to take the course.

Those who have signed up for a class with limited enrollment and listed it as #1 are encouraged to sign up for at least one additional class. Members are also encouraged not to sign up for a course with limited enrollment if they know they won't be there for all four sessions.

Registrant 1

	Cost
2024 - 2025 annual dues (\$25)	
Divided Loyalty in the American Revolution	
Woodworking—minus the wood and the work	
Religions: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism	
The Life and Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright	
Seeing Birds	
Total:	

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Registrant 2

	Cost
2024 - 2025 annual dues (\$25)	
Divided Loyalty in the American Revolution	
Woodworking—minus the wood and the work	
Religions: Exclusivism, Inclusivism, and Pluralism	
The Life and Architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright	
Seeing Birds	
Total:	

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____