

Spring Quarter 2026  
Course Catalog



# Senior Academy

*Never stop learning.*



Senior  
Services  
FOR SOUTH SOUND

[southsoundseniors.org/courses](https://southsoundseniors.org/courses) • 360.586.6181

# Lifelong Learning at Any Age



At Senior Services for South Sound, we are firm believers that learning doesn't stop at a particular age—it simply evolves. Curiosity, creativity

and the desire to better understand ourselves and the world around us are lifelong companions, and it's never too late to learn something new. The Senior Academy exists to nurture exactly that.

This upcoming spring quarter, our Senior Academy offerings are diverse, wide-ranging, and designed to meet seniors where they are—whether you're looking to explore a new subject, revisit a longtime interest, or simply enjoy meaningful conversation and connection with others.

This spring, you'll find writing classes that invite self-expression and storytelling, alongside mindfulness training that supports well-being and presence. History lovers can dive into topics such as the History of Yankeedom, Ancient Greek History or explore the cycles of American crises.

Those interested in culture and community can learn more about Northwest Nations, while others may be drawn to practical and deeply human topics like caregiving and care-receiving in late life.

In short, we run the gamut.

Our instructors bring expertise, passion and a genuine respect for adult learners, creating spaces that are welcoming, stimulating and enriching. Whether you're eager to stretch your mind, reflect on life's transitions or try something entirely new, we hope something in this catalog piques your interest.

I encourage you to take a look, talk with friends and consider joining us, because learning at any age keeps us engaged, connected and inspired.

We look forward to learning together this spring.

*Amanda Mackison*

Amanda Mackison,  
Olympia Activities Coordinator

# Ready to Join a Class?

## HOW TO REGISTER FOR SENIOR ACADEMY



### Online

Register online securely at [southsoundseniors.org/courses](https://southsoundseniors.org/courses)



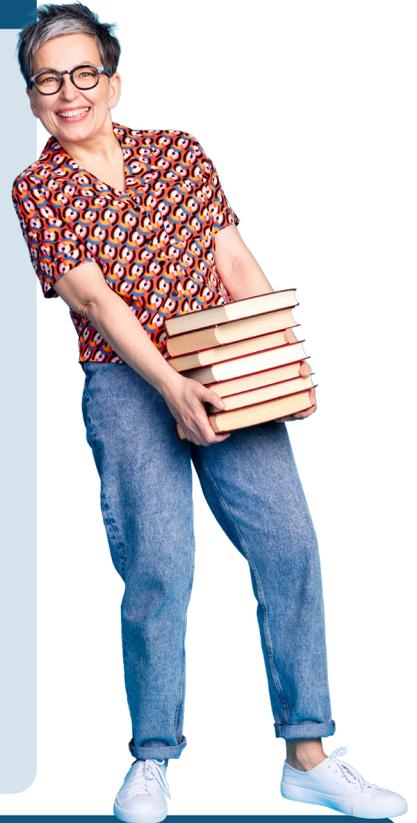
### By Phone

■ Olympia Senior Center  
Call: 360.586.6181  
(M-F, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm)



### In Person

Visit the Olympia Senior Center at  
222 Columbia St NW  
Olympia, WA 98501  
(M-F, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm)



## FEES & REFUNDS



Senior Academy fees are based on the total number of instructional hours. Members receive discounted rates on all Senior Academy classes.

Refund requests must be made before the start of the second day of class.

\*MasterCard, Discover, VISA credit/debit cards and checks accepted.

# Your Life, Your Story

Pam Toal

Have you ever wanted to write your memoir or leave a legacy for your loved ones? This eight-week course will help you write, share and preserve the life stories only you can tell. Whether you're a seasoned writer or just starting out, the Guided Autobiography process offers a structured, supportive environment to help you reflect on your life and the events that shaped it.

Each week you'll receive prompting questions to write two-pages at home on a theme such as family, career, friendship, travel and more. You'll bring your writing the following week to read aloud in class.

Sharing life stories is an ideal way to find new meaning in life and put past events into perspective. No writing experience is necessary, just an openness to appreciate and share the unique life that is yours. Returning students are welcome and will receive an all-new set of themes.



## About the Instructor

Pam Toal is a published writer, coach and certified Guided Autobiography facilitator. Her professional background in non-profits, higher education and consulting led her to discover the rewards of writing and sharing life stories.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

April 16 - June 4  
Thursdays  
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

### COST

Members: \$160  
Non-Members: \$200

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ Limited to 9 students

# Ages in Turmoil

The Rise and Fall of States In and Out of Yankeeedom

Bruce Lerro

World historian Peter Turchin says we are in a revolutionary situation in America. According to Turchin The United States has gone through two periods of prosperity (integration) and two periods of disintegration.

The two cycles of prosperity went from 1760 to 1830 and between 1900 to 1960 and saw wages double and people actually grow in height! During the two periods of decline (1830 to 1900 and 1960 to today), wages were lower and people actually *shrank* in size. Turchin says we are going through a period today akin to the 1850s before the Civil War.

This class should help you make sense not only of what is going on in the United States today, but in the whole world. It grounds our situation today in the world cycles of the rise of fall of civilizations.



## About the Instructor

Bruce has been a night-school college teacher for 27 years. He has taught in alternative college settings, in prisons, and the military, and written eight books—including three on the application of Russian Lev Vygotsky's work on world history.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

April 7 - June 9  
Tuesdays  
2:00 - 4:00 pm

### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

### COST

Members: \$180  
Non-Members: \$225

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ Required reading: *End Times: Elites, Counter-Elites and the Path of Political Disintegration*  
Turchin, Peter (2023)

# Bottoms Up!

Strengthening the Body-Mind Connection with Mindfulness

Margo Benedetto

While meditation happens in the head, mindfulness helps us discover that real wisdom lies in the body. In each class, we'll combine guided meditations with practical applications to understand and strengthen the body-brain relationship.

We'll also use mindful tools to get off our seats and feel better both mentally and physically in "normal," everyday activities. Curious about what mindful eating, functional mobility, loving kindness, sense-foraging and nonviolent communication have in common?

Join the class! Special bonus: guided practice in exercises to reduce pain and injury in the back, hips and knees.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

April 9 - May 28  
Thursdays  
10:00 - 11:30 am

### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

### COST

Members: \$105  
Non-Members: \$130

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ No class May 14



### About the Instructor

Margo is a certified mindfulness instructor and veteran classroom teacher in Washington State. A leader in bringing mindfulness education to the Centralia School District, she continues to provide personal and professional development on mindfulness for individuals and groups.

# Northwest Nations

Global Currents & Local Tides Part II

## Ron Johnson

This six-week course continues our journey into Indigenous lifeways, expanding our lens to include global Indigenous educational movements and cultural exchanges. Inspired by the 2025 World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (WIPCE) in Aotearoa (New Zealand), we will explore how Indigenous communities across the world are reclaiming knowledge systems, revitalizing languages, and renewing relationships with land and spirit.

Through stories, scholarship, and community dialogue, we'll connect the Pacific Northwest's rich Indigenous heritage with global movements of sovereignty and healing. Each session invites participants to reflect on their own place in the story—honoring the wisdom of elders, the resilience of youth, and the responsibilities we carry forward.



### About the Instructor

Professor Ron Johnson is an enrolled member of the Makah Nation in Neah Bay. His mother, Julie, is an enrolled member of the Lummi Nation. Ron has taught courses at The Evergreen State College and currently teaches at Northwest Indian College.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

April 3 - May 8  
Fridays  
2:00 - 4:00 pm

### WHERE

Zoom

### COST

Members: \$120  
Non-Members: \$150

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ This course is designed for honored life long learners seeking meaningful engagement with Indigenous knowledge, history, and contemporary movements. No prior experience is required—only a willingness to listen, learn, and participate in respectful dialogue.

# It's All Greek to Me

An Introduction to Ancient Greek History, Society, and Archaeology

Tony Usibelli

This six-week class is for those who are interested in the ancient world or who might have been or will travel to Greece. It will include the Bronze Age world of the Minoans and Mycenaeans (and Trojans), Archaic and Classical Greece, and the Hellenistic societies emerging from Alexander the Great's conquests.

We will explore archaeological remains, selections from ancient literature and philosophy, and modern scholarship all within the context of social, political, and cultural history. And we will try to better understand the contradictory elements of Greek society - democracy and philosophy juxtaposed with xenophobia, misogyny, slave-holding, and violent conflict.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

March 30 - May 4

Mondays

10:00 am - 12:00 pm

### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

### COST

Members: \$120

Non-Members: \$150

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person



### About the Instructor

Tony Usibelli holds a B.A. in classical archaeology and art history from the Univ. of Missouri and the Intercollegiate Center for Classical Studies in Rome. He is an active member of the Puget Sound chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America, the Puget Sound Ancient Numismatic group and has taught classes at Evergreen and SPSCC.

Tony has developed and taught classes on Ancient Italy, Greece and Egypt at the Olympia Senior Academy and through Bellevue College.

# These Are the Times That Try OUR Souls

A Reflection on Four Cyclical American Crises

John Rapano, Ph.D.

Thomas Paine wrote “These are the times that try men’s souls” after The Declaration of Independence in 1776 led to invasion and civil strife. Four score and seven years later in 1863 Lincoln honored “those who have given their last full measure of devotion” to preserve the Union. 87 years later in 1941 we were in a global war against totalitarianism to preserve democracy.

Now with the seemingly irreconcilable differences dividing America today we are on target for the next crisis, scheduled for 2028. While the 87-year cycle may be coincidence, it could be related to the time it takes for a crisis to pass beyond the living memory of the current generation and its lessons to be lost.

Our nation was an experiment that grew out of the rational philosophy of the Enlightenment. In this course we will examine how and to what extent our national crises arise when this founding idea conflicts with America’s original sins: racism and sexism. We will examine these surprisingly similar American crises through a historical and sociological lens and ask what we can learn from each that can give insight into what is required of us today.



## About the Instructor

John is retired from teaching Human Development and Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He earned a Ph.D. in Administration and Leadership Studies for Nonprofits at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2010. John “fully” retired and relocated to Olympia in 2019 but continues to be involved in a variety of volunteer activities.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

April 13 – May 18  
Mondays  
1:00 – 3:00 pm

### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

### COST

Members: \$120  
Non-Members: \$150

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

# Going Deeper in Fiction

Diane Chiddister

This class is aimed at fiction writers who already have a project going. We'll be looking at ways to go deeper into your characters, whether you're working on a novel or short stories.

Fiction writers who deliver an emotional wallop in their writing, such as Maggie O'Farrell in "Hamnet," or Donna Tartt in "The Goldfinch," are also masters of going deep. So we'll be looking at how they, and a few other writers, do so. One strategy is slowing time down in a scene. A second technique is using a close third-person point of view. We'll experiment with these strategies in your own writing.

Our class format will be instructor presentations, discussion and free writing in the first half of class, then in the second hour, a "writing workshop" format, in which one or two class member volunteers share their work and receive feedback.

## INFORMATION

### WHEN

April 14 - May 19  
Tuesdays  
1:00 - 3:00 pm

### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

### COST

Members: \$120  
Non-Members: \$150

### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ Limited to 9 students



### About the Instructor

Diane Chiddister is a lifelong fiction writer, and a MFA graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop. She veered into a professional life of journalism, while always writing short stories on the side. After retiring from journalism in 2018, she wrote her first novel, *One More Day*, which won the grand prize in the North Street Book Prize in 2022. She's just signed a contract with Atmosphere Press for her third novel, *Shoulders of Love*, which will be published in fall of 2026.

# Care-Giving and Care-Receiving in Late Life

## Martha Worcester

How do we provide care for our relatives and friends as we ourselves age? How do we find care for ourselves when needed among relatives and friends? What services are available to help us give and receive the care we need? This workshop provides helpful information, drawn from research and life experiences, about how those who provide care to others or need care for themselves manage their lives and find support, strength, and enjoyment as they give and receive. The class covers both local and long-distance care, and times when only a short term of care is needed as well as on-going care.

There will be time for sharing and planning together for your own unique situations. A variety of available community resources are described that support various aspects of care and health conditions, and ways to best access their services.

### INFORMATION

#### WHEN

April 17  
Friday  
9:30 am - 2:30 pm

#### WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

#### COST

Members: \$40  
Non-Members: \$50

#### REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ We will break for one hour for lunch from 11:30 am - 12:30 pm



### About the Instructor

Martha Worcester has been a nurse and leader of many types of groups related to giving and receiving care. Insights gained from her graduate research (Why don't people ask for help when they need it?) have been helpful in her own life as she cared for her parents and continues to be helpful as she provides support for adult-children, relatives, and other people in her life along the way.

# Keep Learning Stay Connected

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Senior Academy is just one of the many ways **Senior Services for South Sound** helps older adults stay engaged, informed and inspired.

## When you become a member, you receive:

- ★ Discounted Senior Academy class rates
- ★ Savings on Trips & Tours
- ★ Access to more activities at the Olympia and Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Centers

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**Annual Membership: \$72**

**Lifetime Membership: \$1,200**

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**Join today at**  
**[southsoundseniors.org](https://southsoundseniors.org)**  
**360.586.6181**