

Winona State University Retiree Center

FALL 2026



<http://www.winona.edu/retiree/senioruni.asp>

For further program information, please call 507.457.5565

## WHAT IS SENIOR UNIVERSITY?

Senior University WSU is an educational program offered through the Winona State University Retiree Center. The program provides a series of peer-led, non-credit courses designed to promote intellectual engagement, cultural enrichment, and lifelong learning. Courses are taught by Professor Emeriti, current WSU faculty, and other subject matter experts who contribute their scholarly and professional expertise. Senior University fosters a collegial environment that encourages continued personal growth and the exchange of ideas among participants. Classes meet once per week over a four- to six-week term and do not include tests or grades.

Senior U is open to retirees and adult learners in the community.

If a Senior University course has to be cancelled, you will receive a full refund. Please see the full cancellation policy along with the [course registration link](#) and instructions on [page 10](#) of this booklet.

**SENIOR UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE:**  
**Jim Bromeland, Rill Reuter, Jim Reynolds, Richard Shields**

Retiree Center Director, Jessica Kauphusman

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# Senior University Classes

## FALL 2026

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*Spring Birding - Spring 2018*

# Senior U Lite: Gardens of Purpose at the WSU Landscape Arboretum

**Instructor: Nathan Anderson**

**Day: Wednesdays**

**Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

**Sessions: August 19, 26**

**Course Fee: \$20.00**

**Register: [Gardens of Purpose Course Registration](#)**

The Landscape Arboretum at Winona State University is more than a beautiful campus setting—it is a living classroom designed with intention. This course offers an engaging overview of the Arboretum’s mission, exploring both the theory behind its design and its practical application across the WSU campus. Special attention will be given to WSU’s Gardens of Purpose: distinctive interpretive gardens and landscaped areas intentionally created to serve specific educational, ecological, and cultural purposes beyond general campus beautification. Topics include landscape design principles, thoughtful plant selection, and practical considerations for garden care and maintenance. The course features guided walking tours of the Gardens of Purpose, providing close-up exploration of these spaces along with ample opportunities for discussion, questions, and shared discovery.

Nathan Anderson serves as the Landscape Arboretum Director at Winona State University (WSU). Prior to joining WSU, he practiced as a landscape architect with a focus on residential landscape design in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. He recently completed the Longwood Fellowship, a year-long leadership development program for public garden administrators at Longwood Gardens in Pennsylvania. In his current role, Anderson oversees the planning, development, and stewardship of the university’s tree collection and interpretive landscapes.



# The Changing Face of the United States

**Instructor: Aurea Osgood**

**Day: Wednesdays**

**Time: 3:00-4:30 p.m.**

**Sessions: September 9, 16, 23, 30**

**Course Fee: \$40.00 - *Class will be taught in a hybrid format. You can attend class in person or online via Zoom.***

**Register: [Changing Face of US Course Registration](#)**

Who are we as a nation—and how did we get here? This course offers an engaging introduction to demography, the study of population, with a focus on the changing face of the United States. Participants will explore how forces such as birth rates, aging, migration, and geographic change shape American society. Using real demographic data, the course includes hands-on activities that bring population trends to life and make the numbers meaningful and accessible. By examining demographic patterns past and present, this course helps tell the story of who we were, who we are today, and who we may become—offering valuable insight into the social, cultural, and economic forces shaping the nation's future.

Dr. Aurea Osgood is a demographer by training, earning her PhD in sociology and demography from Bowling Green State University. She taught demography for nearly 20 years (at BGSU and WSU) before leaving the classroom. She currently works with the Teaching, Learning, and Technology team at WSU. Aurea has a genuine love of all things data and using data to tell a story.



# Photo Communication: Making Images That Tell Your Story

**Instructor: Tom Grier**

**Day: Mondays**

**Time: 1:00-3:00 p.m.**

**Sessions: September 21, 28, October 5, 12, 19**

**Course Fee: \$40.00**

**Register: [Photo Communication Registration](#)**

This course begins with visual communication theory and elements of aesthetically pleasing composition. The class considers how effective visual messages are created, viewed and understood. Class discussions also cover basic technical aspects of cameras: focus, shutter speed, aperture and light sensitivity, and an introduction to photo editing for image quality and clarity of meaning. Students follow a practical, hands-on approach to create images that communicate their intended message and share images with classmates for discussion and constructive critical analysis. Students will create digital photo images on whichever camera they prefer to use: smartphone, Digital SLR or compact digital camera.

After 34 years at Winona State University, Tom Grier retired in 2021. He was WSU's director of university communication and chief photographer for 18 years and a professor of mass communication for 16 years. Tom earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Winona State University and a doctorate from the University of Minnesota. Tom founded the Navajo Oral History Project and directed it for ten years in collaboration with Diné College on the Navajo Nation in Arizona. He also started the Aerial Visual Communication Lab at WSU, teaching the use of drone photography and videography in support of journalism, public relations and advertising.



# What Were We Thinking?: God, Nature, and Human Nature in American Thought

**Instructor: Greg Schmidt**

**Day: Wednesdays**

**Time: 2:30-4:00 p.m.**

**Sessions: October 14, 21, 28, Nov. 4, 18 (no class on Nov. 11)**

**Course Fee: \$40.00**

**Register: [What Were We Thinking Course Registration](#)**

What did Americans once believe about God, nature, and human nature—and how did those beliefs change over time? This discussion-based course explores the evolving ideas that shaped Euro-American thought from the colonial period through the modern era. Through close reading and conversation, participants will examine brief texts from key intellectual movements, including American Puritanism, the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Darwinism, and Modernism. Readings will feature influential voices such as John Winthrop, Benjamin Franklin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others, offering insight into how Americans have understood the world, their place within it, and themselves. Together, we will consider how these shifting perspectives continue to influence contemporary debates about belief, science, culture, and human meaning.

Dr. Schmidt (Ph.D. History, University of Illinois, 1980) taught History courses at WSU for 34 years, retiring in 2019. He taught an upper-division course on American Intellectual and Cultural History every third semester.



# Election 2026: Democracy Challenged

**Instructor: Jim Bromeland**

**Day: Thursdays**

**Time: 2:30-4:30 p.m.**

**Sessions: October 22, 29 November 5, 12**

**Course Fee: \$40.00**

**Register: [Election 2026 Course Registration](#)**

Concerns about the health of democracy in the United States have grown in recent years. Many scholars and global indices that track democratic systems point to signs of strain, including comparatively low voter turnout and declining public trust in government institutions. At the same time, debates over voter fraud, election integrity, gerrymandering, and changes to voting laws have intensified, raising important questions about the fairness and accessibility of the electoral process. Proposals such as nationalizing aspects of congressional elections further highlight the evolving nature of these discussions. Against this backdrop, the 2026 midterm elections may serve as a critical moment—testing not only electoral systems, but also the depth of Americans' confidence in and commitment to democratic principles.

Jim Bromeland taught political science at Winona State University for 35 years, specializing in American politics. Since his retirement, he has continued to teach a Senior University course focused on U.S. elections during each election cycle.



# Relativity, Quantum Mechanics and the Stars

**Instructor: Richard Shields**

**Day: Tuesdays**

**Time: 2:30-4:00 p.m.**

**Sessions: October 27, November 3, 10, 17**

**Course Fee: \$40.00**

**Register: [Relativity, Quantum Mechanics Registration](#)**

This four-lecture course explores the revolutionary ideas that reshaped modern physics. We begin with Einstein's theories of relativity and their insights into space, time, gravity, and the origins of the universe. Next, we examine the strange world of quantum mechanics, including the uncertainty principle, atomic structure, and antimatter. The third lecture focuses on the Second Law of Thermodynamics and the role of entropy in shaping time and the fate of the universe. Finally, we turn to cosmology, exploring stellar evolution, the Big Bang, dark matter, and dark energy, and consider how the search for quantum gravity may point to the next frontier in physics.

Richard Shields taught physics at Winona State University for forty years and has led numerous Senior University courses. The topics in this course reflect strong interest and enthusiasm from participants in his previous classes.



# SENIOR UNIVERSITY FALL 2026

**Registration for courses is primarily done online with a credit card. If you don't have access to a computer or would prefer to pay by check, please stop in at the Retiree Center, and we can assist you.**

Start your online registration here:

[https://mnsu.rschoolday.com/public/getclass/category\\_id/219/program\\_id/37](https://mnsu.rschoolday.com/public/getclass/category_id/219/program_id/37)

Watch your email for a message confirming your registration and providing additional details about the class or classes for which you have registered. If you do not receive a confirmation email, or if you have any questions or need assistance, contact us weekdays during regular business hours at:

WSU Retiree Center

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Winona, MN 55987

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507.457.5565

[All checks are made payable to "WSU Retiree Center"](#)

## **SENIOR UNIVERSITY CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY**

If a class must be canceled due to insufficient enrollment, inclement weather, or emergency circumstances, you will be notified as soon as possible and receive a full refund.

You may withdraw from a class and receive a full refund if we receive your withdrawal and refund request in writing, via email, mail or in person, at least five full business days before the first class date. Please note: if you pay by check, you will need to complete a W9 form to receive a refund by check from Winona State University. Credit Card payments will be refunded within 3-5 business days.

HOPE TO SEE YOU IN CLASS!



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