The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at the University of Connecticut is an academic cooperative that provides older adults with opportunities for intellectual development, cultural stimulation, and social interaction.

**Is The Medium The Message?**

Nicolas Carr, a Pulitzer Prize finalist for tech writing, writes in his book, *The Shallows: What The Internet Is Doing To Our Brains*, the following:

“A weirdly poignant scene toward the end of Stanley Kubrick's, *2001: a Space Odyssey*, Bowman having nearly been sent to a deep space death by the malfunctioning machine, is calmly, coldly disconnecting the memory circuits that control its artificial brain. "Dave, my mind is going," Hal says forlornly. "I can feel it. I can feel it."

“I can feel it too. Over the last few years I've had an uncomfortable sense that someone, or something, has been tinkering with my brain reprogramming the neural circuitry, reprogramming the memory. My mind isn't going – so far as I can tell – but it's changing. I'm not thinking the way I used to think. I feel it most strongly when I'm reading. I used to find it easy to immerse myself in a book or a lengthy article. My mind would get caught up in the twists of the narrative or the turns of the arguments, and I'd spend hours strolling through long stretches of prose. That's rarely the case anymore. Now my concentration starts to drift after a page or two. I get fidgety, lose the thread, begin looking for something else to do. I feel like I'm always dragging my wayward brain back to the text. The deep reading that used to come naturally has become a struggle.

I think I know what's going on. For well over a decade now, I've been spending a lot of time online, searching and surfing and sometimes adding to the great databases of the Internet. The Web's been a godsend to me as a writer. Research that once required days in the stacks or periodical rooms of libraries can be done in minutes. A few Google searches, some quick clicks on hyperlinks, and I've got the telltale facts for the private quote I was after. I couldn't begin to tally the hours or the gallons of gasoline the net has saved me. I do most of my banking and a lot of my shopping online. I use my browser to pay my bills, book flights and hotel rooms, renew my driver’s license, send invitations and greeting cards. Even when I'm not working, I'm as likely as not to be foraging in the web's data thickets – reading and writing emails, scanning headlines and blog posts, following Facebook updates, watching video streams, downloading music, or just tripping lately from link to link to link.”

Sound familiar, OLLI members? Could there possibly be something pernicious occurring in our media? Marshall McLuhan in his 1964 book, *Understanding Media* declared the electric media of the 20th century – telephone, radio, movies, television – were breaking the tyranny of text over our thoughts and senses." What did he mean when he said, "The medium is the message." ?Was he sounding a warning about the threat that kind of power poses – and the risk of being oblivious to that threat? And what about the rise of the Internet, the computer, Google and Facebook? Could the ubiquitousness of that media be having any effect on the way we view the world or react to it? Of course it does. Look at Google. Its stated purpose is to rely on cognitive psychology research to further its goal of making people use their computers more efficiently. Facebook wants to connect the whole world. Even the Luddites among us are affected by computers. Modern advertisers use data gathering to influence us to buy their products. And, reading the current newspapers and watching the TV news, social media may even be influencing our political system.

Could this be a boon or a coming disaster? Probably both. I know my Kindle allows me to instantly download a book instead of going to the library or the bookstore to get one. But I feel guilty not having a real book in my hands. Perhaps there is hope still. And you thought you were just getting more mature.

rjg
**CURRICULUM COMMITTEE**

A look at the current OLLI course catalog shows that the categories of courses listed are Art and Art History, Culture and Language, Current Events, Health and Wellness, History, Literature and Writing, Math and Science, Music, Performing Arts, Personal Development, Philosophy and Religion and Visual Arts.

At present prospective teachers propose courses to the OLLI staff. At the end of a course students are surveyed to evaluate the course and with a favorable rating and a willing teacher the course is repeated. A source for new courses can be previous presenters who have acquaintances with similar interest in teaching.

This year the OLLI Leadership Council is restarting a Curriculum Committee. The purpose of this committee will be to provide leadership for curriculum development at OLLI. They will set goals for a well balanced curriculum by evaluating proposed courses and seeking out presenters. Also being tried this year is the innovative approach of Laura Donorffio of the UConn faculty, providing students from her Intergenerational class to develop potentially new courses. The students working with the curriculum committee supply ideas for courses as well as contact information for potential presenters. An approach to course design used in the past was to have one facilitator supervise a number of presenters so that the primary facilitator is not responsible for every presentation.

Another possible course design would be using videos from on-line courses such as Coursera and have the facilitator lead a discussion about the video similar to a course given now where the class watches a movie and then the teacher leads a discussion. Suggestions from the membership for new courses are welcome and encouraged.

The initial curriculum committee will be small in number comprised of members and presenters. Participation in this committee will enhance social interaction of people interested in furthering the OLLI mission of teaching and lifelong learning. We expect the committee to recruit over time more members and possibly have members specialize in evaluating a specific category of course such as History or Wellness.

The committee may seek out speakers from retired high school or university staffs. Teaching to an OLLI audience can be lots of fun because of the audience interest and participation. The internet and You Tube are a boon to course development.

A curriculum committee of the OLLI membership should over time enhance the course offerings and reflect the evolving interests of an ever-changing student body.

*Ira Mickenberg M.D.*

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**OLLI BOOK CLUB**

Contact: **Nancy Via** at nvia@sbcglobal.net

All book club meetings will be held at the UConn Waterbury campus in room 102D at 1:00PM on the 3rd Monday of the month.

**FALL 2017 Meeting Schedule:**

November 20... *Elizabeth Street*, by Laurie Fabiano

The *Newsletter* is always looking for content from our readers. This may be in the form of original work or items you have found interesting and may wish to pass on to others. We always welcome any suggestions you may have to improve the newsletter or criticisms of it. The *Newsletter* exists to inform and entertain our readers.

Contact **Bob Grady** at yvoorg@aol.com or any OLLI staff member.
OLLI Circle Line Cruise

Winter is coming and unlike many OLLI members who escape to Florida or some Caribbean island and totally avoiding shoveling snow and fretting about the car not starting, many of us don’t have that option.

One thing to help us non-snowbirds make it through the winter is to look forward to the May 15, 2018, spring trip to New York City. There will be a two-hour Circle Line cruise around New York City as part of the trip.

One highlight of the cruise, for me, will be another chance to view the Statue of Liberty. My grandparents, arriving from Russia about a century ago, likely saw the Lady with the Lamp as a sign that their long trip was finally over. I see the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of our country. Every time I have the chance to view the statue designed by Frederic Auguste Bartholdi, built by Gustave Eiffel and representing the Roman goddess, Libertas, I totally enjoy the experience.

Some may say that their tour around Central Park was the highlight of the trip. Others might say the best part of the trip is a chance to walk around Rockefeller Center and have lunch there.

After lunch, and you may choose to bring your lunch from home, we will board a Circle Line ship and relax during the two-hour narrated cruise. There will be time to take pictures of the Upper Bay, Bay Ridge and Greenpoint areas, the Brooklyn Bridge and the Manhattan skyline.

What if you, an OLLI member, would like to take a friend or relative on the trip but they are not OLLI members? All OLLI trips are open to non-members as well. The cost of the trip is $98 for OLLIs and $108 for non-members.

The bus leaves the Chase Parkway commuter lot at 8 AM. The return trip should bring travelers back around 7:30 PM.

The cost of the trip includes all admissions and tours, a Friendship Tour director and gratuities.

Call Friendship Tours at 1-800-243-1630 to reserve.
You are driving along in your two-seater car on a wild, stormy night. You pass by a bus stop and you see three people waiting for the bus:

1. An old lady who looks as if she is about to die.
2. An old friend who once saved your life.
3. The perfect man (or) woman you have been dreaming about.

Which one would you choose to offer a ride to, knowing that there can only be one passenger in your car. Think now before reading. This is a moral/ethical dilemma that was once actually used as part of a job application........

You could pick up the old lady because she's going to die, and thus you should save her first; or you could take the old friend because he once saved your life and this would be the perfect chance to pay him back. However, you may never be able to find your perfect dream lover again.

The candidate who was hired (out of 200 applicants) had no trouble coming up with his answer.

He simply said, "I would give the car keys to my old friend, and let him take the old lady to the hospital. I would stay behind and wait for the bus with the man/ woman of my dreams."

Never forget to "Think outside of the box!"

- I changed my password to "incorrect" so whenever I forget it the computer will say, "Your password is incorrect."
- Artificial intelligence is no match for natural stupidity.
Art, Nature and Meditation

Ten thousand flowers in Spring,  
The moon in Autumn,  
A cool breeze in Summer,  
Snow in Winter.  
If your mind isn’t clouded by unnecessary things,  
This is the best season of your life. - Wu-Men

Sitting in the beautiful Main Stage Theater of Naugatuck Valley Community College on Sunday and enjoying every single second of the Waterbury Symphony’s Fall Concert showcasing The Phantom of the Opera silent movie accompanied by classical selections chosen by Maestro Leif Bjaland, I was struck by a scary thought (well, it was a scary movie!) Suppose I never had access again to a movie, a play, a concert, music, or television? How and when would I be able to experience the arts? Well, while I hope that never happens, I can let my mind go in another direction to experiencing art through nature, and even just the everyday experience of being alive.

A couple of weeks ago I had the pleasure of attending a weekend retreat at the Copper Beech Institute, the non-sectarian wing of Holy Family Retreat Center in West Hartford. The presenter was psychologist Dr. Brian Luke Seaward, internationally known writer and speaker. The topic was “Resiliency in the Face of Stress,” and many of the weekend sessions centered around being more in the present and appreciating the art, mystery and wisdom of our physical world. That is, after all, how we as humans perceive the spiritual and ethereal, through our senses. One of the exercises was to list what we love through each of the senses, and to revel in our enjoyment of them, not to take them for granted. We answered questions on our own and then joined with groups or three or four to compare and talk about our responses. We talked about sight, sound, taste, smell, touch and finally, the sense of the Divine, which may combine one or more of the foregoing. I spoke of the sight of my dog smiling at me when I come home, the taste of that first cup of coffee of the day, the smell of garlic cooking, the sound of my grandsons’ feet in the morning over my head (yes, after 12 years living in an intergenerational family - it never gets old!), a good hug, and for the Divine, the Tao of Dying, the ability as a Hospice volunteer to help people journey through their last days and hours. Fellow retreatants talked of watching a baby sleeping, listening to crickets at night, a good Camembert cheese, a massage, and seeing a newborn baby. I challenge you to make your own list of at least three things you love in each category. Your answers may surprise you.

The point, obviously, of the weekend, was to remind us that beauty, also known as art, is always around us, and if we literally stop and smell the roses, it can be a great stress reliever. Go outside, and see the rapid change from summer to autumn we are experiencing, gloriously and blessedly late this year! Check out the squirrels and watch them preparing for what is to come. Enjoy our breath-taking sunset -- this time of the year is especially wonderful! As you do, breathe deeply. Let the oxygen that is in our relatively non-polluted air – unlike large Chinese cities where facemasks are the usual - get deep into health.

Meditation? No, and contemplate “OM.” You just mindfully, on the music, tastes, that are all around OLLI travelers!
2017 Thanksgiving Food Drive

To benefit Greater Waterbury Interfaith Ministries

Oct. 20th - Nov. 20th

Drop off non-perishable donations to the Membership Table or to the OLLI Office (Room 103)