I am taking Bill Blair’s George Orwell course this semester. Reading 1984 is like reading the local newspaper or listening to cable news. The Republican–American newspaper on Tuesday, October 8 printed under the headline, “Turkey attacks Kurds in Syria,” a third paragraph which begins, “Turkish Pres. Recep Tayyip Erdogan confirmed the offensive, called ‘Operation Peace Spring,’ which started at 4 PM on Wednesday and drew swift condemnation from Ankara’s Western allies.” WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY and IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH are three of the tenets that BIG BROTHER drummed into the citizens according to Orwell. The book is dystopian in nature but was printed in 1948! So what makes it seem so current today?

George Orwell wrote about a society that has given up its privacy – probably voluntarily over a long period of time. War is continuous and never winnable. The government controls your every movement and BIG BROTHER is constantly watching over you through the TV and the thought police. Truth is malleable and can change instantly. NEWSPEAK means holding opposing facts and believing both are true at times. BIG BROTHER will take care of you.

Of course, we would never have a society like that, would we?

What do we have that Orwell did not have?

Computers and the Internet – which have changed our lives drastically. Computers allow us to manipulate vast amounts of data efficiently and quickly. The Internet allows us to gather tremendous amounts of data. There have been massive advancements in medical knowledge, especially in how the brain processes information. Advertisers love the latter. So do politicians. Both use the data to manipulate the population.

Erik Vance, in his book, "Suggestible You, the Curious Science of Your Brain's Ability to Deceive, Transform, and Heal," writes, "Just as Copernicus pulled back a curtain of superstition and exposed a shiny new universe, brain scientists today are tugging at another curtain that promises answers to these questions. One of the most important answers lies in the discovery that our brains are hardwired to trick themselves from time to time. The key to this ability lies in a single word: expectation. It is impossible to overstate just how important expectation is to the functioning of our brains.” It has been found that there is a slight delay between the time a sensory input occurs and when the brain reacts. “Your brain is wired to build expectations throughout your life for hours, years, or decades, then tries its best to turn those expectations into reality. Simply put, your brain doesn’t want to be wrong – and in order for expectation to match reality, it’s willing to bend a few rules or even cheat outright... Expectation is both the job description of the brain and its currency. It shapes how we think and move in the world around us.... Advertisers study expectation to shape their branding, economists study it to see how we understand what other people are saying.” Computer experts use it to develop algorithms to help change your thinking.

Vance writes, “Our brains spend most of their time processing what they have already experienced in order to figure out what’s about to happen... Expectation is just a system of shortcuts our brains have developed to get through life without stopping every five seconds to figure things out... In 1996, the philosopher and artificial intelligence pioneer Daniel Dennett wrote, "A mind is fundamentally an anticipator, an expectation – generator. Our brains spend most of their time processing what they have already experienced in order to figure out what’s about to happen.”

Computer experts take advantage of this research and build algorithms to manipulate your suggestibility and expectations. They gather information from social media, your credit card and your cell phone. And while we do not have the thought police yet, how prescient was George Orwell in 1948?

So, OLLI members, be aware just where your personal information ends up – if you can!
A SHOT OF WHISKEY - In the old west a .45 cartridge for a six-gun cost 12 cents, so a glass of whiskey. If a cowhand was low on cash he would often give the bartender a cartridge in exchange for a drink. This became known as a "shot" of whiskey.

BUYING THE FARM - This is synonymous with dying. During WW1 soldiers were given life insurance policies worth $5,000. This was about the price of an average farm so if you died you "bought the farm" for your survivors.

IRON CLAD CONTRACT - This came about from the ironclad ships of the Civil War. It meant something so strong it could not be broken.

RIFF RAFF - The Mississippi River was the main way of travelling from north to south. Riverboats carried passengers and freight but they were expensive so most people used rafts. Everything had the right of way over rafts which were considered cheap. The steering oar on the rafts was called a "riff" and this transposed into riff-raff, meaning low class.

COBWEB - The Old English word for "spider" was "cob."

SHIP STATEROOMS - Travelling by steamboat was considered the height of comfort. Passenger cabins on the boats were not numbered. Instead they were named after states. To this day cabins on ships are called staterooms.

SLEEP TIGHT - Early beds were made with a wooden frame. Ropes were tied across the frame in a crisscross pattern. A straw mattress was then put on top of the ropes. Over time the ropes stretched, causing the bed to sag. The owner would then tighten the ropes to get a better night's sleep.

RIDDLES

1. When you add two letters to it, what word becomes shorter?
2. What can grow to be larger than you, but will never weigh more than you?
3. Mark's mother had three children. The first child was named July, the second child was named August. What was the third child's name?
4. There is a large man at the butcher shop. He stands 5'9" tall and works out three times a week. What does the butcher weigh?
5. Say you’re running in a race and you are slowly catching up with a runner in front of you. Right before the finish line, you pass the man in second place. What place did you finish the race in?

Answers:

1. Short
2. Your shadow
3. Mark
4. Meat
5. Second

OLLI Café

Today: October 18th, 2019
12:15 - 1:30pm, Room 113

JUAN SANTIAGO: BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO AFRO CUBAN/LATIN JAZZ MUSIC

Please come enjoy a live Afro Cuban/Latin Jazz performance by Juan Santiago. He will provide a short history of this music detailing the origins of West African rhythms and how this music made its journey into Latin America and the United States. Juan will also discuss how he recorded the background tracks to emulate a live band in order to perform a repertoire of classic live Afro Cuban/Latin Jazz. Juan is a talented band arranger, recording engineer and musician.

Coming Up Next: October 25th, 2019
Three Families, Two Countries, One Artist - From Flesh and Breath to Canvas with Mary Donnarumma Sharnick
FOOD FESTIVAL FUN!

The Clubs & Activities Committee members invite you to join us at the Mini Holiday Greek Food Fest which will be held on Saturday, October 19, from 11:00a.m. to 7:00p.m. at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, 937 Chase Parkway, Waterbury. We will be meeting at 12 noon in the church hall to enjoy many of our favorite Greek foods…including gyros, pastitsio, moussaka, spanakopita, Greek pastries and breads. There is free parking and free admission to this event. We hope you can join us for a delicious and delightful dining experience. See you Saturday, October 19, 12 noon in the church hall.

ANNOUNCING "OLLI ALL-STAR" BOARD!

The OLLI Team will soon be introducing an "OLLI All-Star" Board in Room 102. This board will serve as a monthly appreciation and recognition of our OLLI members who make an impact here at OLLI and/or the community at large. Starting October 18th, 2019 you may nominate OLLI members who you believe should be showcased on the board.

Just submit a name and a short description as to why you believe the individual should be recognized. You can turn in your nomination to the main OLLI office (Room 103) or place it in any of the suggestion boxes on the Info table or table outside the main OLLI office. Thank you for being awesome!

Upcoming OLLI Travel

FALL 2020
10/22/2019: Murder on the Bellevue Express, Newport/RI – member cost $116

SPRING 2020
4/22/2020: Harlem, NYC – member cost $109
5/5-7/2020: Atlantic City/Cape May, NJ – member cost $359 pp double/triple, $455 pp single
6/5/2020: NYC Philharmonic(Copland & Nico Muhly conducted by Jaap Van Zweden- member cost $122 pp

Flyers available at the OLLI Information Table. All prices are member prices. Non-members are charged a slight surcharge that is listed on all flyers. Call Friendship Tours for information and reservations (1-800-243-1630). Mention OLLI Travel. (Please do not call the OLLI Office.)

Please Note – All OLLI Trips will depart from and return to the Chase Parkway DOT Commuter Lot, Waterbury. Maps of this Departure Area are available on the OLLI Information Table.
OLLI Book Club
The Book Club meets the third Monday of every month in Room 102 @ 1:00pm. Come by!

Oct. 21: Georgia by Dawn Tripp
Nov. 18: Bel Canto by Ann Patchett

Contact: nvia@sbcglobal.net

OLLI Genealogy Club
The Genealogy Club meets the third Thursday of the month. Last meeting this semester will take place on November 21st, 10:00 - 11:30 am in Room 317 (computer lab on third floor of main building)

Contact: dianeciba@gmail.com

OLLI Film Club
The Film Club meets on three Wednesdays in the Fall and Spring semesters. The third and final film club meeting will be on Wed, November 6th at 12:00 - 3:00pm. Film TBA.

OLLI Photography Club
The Photography Club meets the last Friday of each month at 3:30pm in Room 102.

Contact: (t.padgett@hotmail.com).

OLLI Reiki Club
Meetings are the first Monday of each month at 1:00pm in Room 102.

Contact: barbara.schafer@comcast.net

OLLI LEADERSHIP COUNCIL
Council Members
OLLI officers are part of the Leadership Council, which is the principal representative body of the OLLI membership.

President
Ira Mickenberg

Vice President
Mila Limson

Secretary
Mary Peitler

Asst. Secretary
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PARKING INFORMATION
OLLI members with University-issued parking decals may park in the following locations on the following days:

Fridays, any time: UConn’s attached ramp garage (entrance on North Elm St.) or Scovill Street Garage (33 Scovill Street)
Monday - Thursday, morning - 5:00pm: Scovill Street Garage
Monday - Thursday, 5:00pm or later: UConn’s attached ramp garage or Scovill Street Garage

If you would like to utilize OLLI at UConn’s parking options, you must submit an application for a parking permit at: park.uconn.edu/olli-parking-permit-application/

If you do not want to purchase a permit, find other local parking areas here: http://www.waterburyparking.com/pricing/
OLLI artBeat

I love crossword puzzles. We have crossword books scattered around the house, and many times I can be found sitting with a faraway look on my face searching for an answer to a clue. The highlight of the week, of course, is the arrival of the Sunday New York Times puzzle. I think crossword puzzles are truly one of the arts, combining design, culture, language and zest for knowledge! One of my favorite crossword answers is “olio.” It shows up a lot, so I thought I’d share an “olio” of upcoming fall arts and cultural events with you.

Concert/Movie - Here you get a special Waterbury Symphony Orchestra “twofer,” both a concert and a classic movie! If you haven’t purchased your tickets for “Casablanca” with the WSO playing the movie’s original score, on Saturday, November 2 at the Palace, put this newsletter down right now and call (203) 574-4283 to request your OLLI discounted tickets. Join other OLLI members to celebrate Leif Bjaland’s 25th anniversary as symphony director. An afternoon with Bogie, Bergman and Bjaland! Okay, now that you’ve made that call, you may pick up your newsletter again.

Museums - The Yale Peabody Museum has an interesting exhibition of artifacts from Mesopotamia on loan from Yale’s Babylonian Collection. Mesopotamia, you may remember from Western Civilization class, was regarded as the birthplace of urban culture, writing, the state, and many other concepts that shape the world in which we live. “Ancient Mesopotamian Speakers” brings this ancient world to life. Among the artifacts on view is an early account of the Gilgamesh epic, tablets with poems by the first named author in human history, the princess Enheduanna (another woman we didn’t learn about in history class!), and the world’s oldest cookbooks with 4,000 year old recipes. OLLI astronomy presenter Arnie Heisser recommended this exhibit as it also contains tablets with the earliest prose descriptions of the constellations. The exhibit has great relevance because we are living in a time when Metopotamian cultural heritage is endangered due to wars and unrest in the Middle East.

Plays - Any time of the year is a good time to visit the Goodspeed Opera House in Haddam. It’s a nice ride of less than an hour from OLLI. But Billy Elliot is really special! This Tony winning play with music by Elton John celebrates “being yourself.” The story centers around young Billy Elliot who is pulled between his family’s coal-mining roots and his newly discovered passion to dance. Is his future boxing gloves or ballet shoes? Celebrate being yourself at the Goodspeed with this powerful dance-filled story! Until November 24th. My recommendation? Lunch beforehand at Rasslin’ Cats cafe! Lots of fun, especially for cat lovers!

Movies - If you haven’t seen Downton Abbey, hurry, hurry, before it leaves local theaters! It is delightful, and fans of the television series will love seeing their favorite characters again. Sit back, sink into the comfy seats of one of Connecticut’s updated movie theaters, and enjoy the opulence of the English countryside and the manor house. It was wonderful to see Lady Mary again, still so beautiful, and to enjoy the zingers of the inimitable Maggie Smith as Lady Grantham. The cute Upstairs/Downstairs, no, make that the Downstairs/Downstairs, plot twist will make you smile, and the ending - hmmm, what will happen to Downton Abbey, will make you yearn for a sequel. Great escape! For something a little more realistic and grittier, you might want to take in Judy, which looks at the last years in the late Judy Garland’s life. Renee Zellwegger is terrific as the singer, and the story is one most of us remember from this tragic star’s life and death. It is so difficult for me to believe that she was only 47 at the time of her death.

An olio originally meant a rich, thick, Spanish stew consisting of meat and vegetables, but has come to mean an abundance. or mixture. Can you think of any other synonyms for olio? Enjoy an olio of the arts of your choosing this fall. There is so much to do in our beautiful State!
Humans Will Never Live on Another Planet, Nobel Laureate Says - Here's Why.

Here's the reality: We're messing up the Earth and any far out ideas of colonizing another orb when we're done are our own wishful thinking. That's according to Michael Mayor, an astrophysicist who was a co-recipient of the Nobel prize in physics this year for discovering the first planet orbiting a sun like star outside of our solar system.

"If we are talking about exo-planets, things should be clear. We will not migrate there," he told Agence France-Presse. (AFP) He said he felt the need to "kill all the statements that say, 'okay, we will go to a livable planet if one day life is not possible on Earth.'"

All the known exoplanets, or planets outside of our solar system, are too far away to feasibly travel to, he said. "Even in the very optimistic case of a livable planet that is not too far, say a few dozen light years, which is not a lot - it's in the neighborhood - the time to go there is considerable," he added.

Mayor shared part of the Nobel prize this year along with Didier Queloz for discovering the first exoplanet in October 1995. Using novel instruments at the Haute-Provence Observatory in southern France, they detected a gas giant similar to Jupiter, which they named 51Pegasis b. (The other half of the prize was awarded to James Peebles of Princeton University for his work in dark matter and dark energy.)

Since then, over 4000 other exoplanets have been found in the Milky Way, but apparently, none of them can be feasibly reached.

Stephen Kane, a professor of planetary astrophysics at the University of California in Riverside, agrees with Mayor. "The sad reality is that, at this point in human history, all stars are effectively in the distance of infinity." Kane told Live Science. "We struggle very hard as a species to reach the Earth's moon."

We might be able to send people to Mars in the next 50 years, but "I would be very surprised if humanity made it to the orbit of Jupiter within the next few centuries," he said. Since the distance to the nearest star outside of our solar system is about 70,000 times greater than the distance to Jupiter, "all-stars are effectively out of reach."

Well, you might say, plenty of things seemed out of reach until we reach them, such as sending aircraft on intercontinental flights. But "in this case, the required physics to reach the stars, if it exists, is not known to us and it would require a fundamental change in our understanding of the relationship between mass, acceleration and energy."

"So that's where we stand, firmly on the Earth, and unlikely to change for a very, very long time," he said.

Mayor told the AFP: "We must take care of our planet. It is very beautiful and still absolutely livable."

Andrew Fraknoi, emeritus chair of the astronomy department at Foothill College in California agreed that we won't be able to travel to these stars in the near future. But, "I would never say we can never reach the stars and possible habitable planets," he said "Who knows how far technology will evolve after another million years of evolution?"

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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 presenter or staff member.