

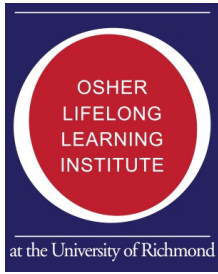


Osher Institute Class/Discussion Group/ Activity Leader Handbook

2021



RICHMOND
School of Professional
& Continuing Studies™



Welcome!

Dear Osher Lifelong Learning Institute Class/Discussion/Activity Group Leader:

Thank you for agreeing to lead course, discussion group or program activity with the University of Richmond's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. It is only through the generosity of your time and talent that our Osher Institute program can be dynamic and exciting.

The mission of the Osher Institute at the University of Richmond is to provide a curriculum of stimulating learning opportunities and special activities for persons 50 and over. The Institute is possible in large part because wonderful people like you are willing to share your knowledge and experience with our members. Though the Osher Institute offers activities outside of the classroom, it is still the incredible classes that bring new people in and keep people coming back. Because of your skill, creativity and enthusiasm, the Osher Institute not only exists, it thrives.

This handbook contains information that we hope you will find helpful when you teach or lead a program activity or discussion group for the Osher Institute at the University of Richmond. In addition to this handbook, please note that the office staff is always willing and eager to help you with any situation that might arise. Don't hesitate to call or stop by. The office is on the ground floor of the Special Programs Building (home of the School of Professional and Continuing Studies) and is open during non-COVID times on Monday through Friday from 8:30 - 5:00 pm. Staff is currently working remotely, so it's best to contact all of us via email: osher@richmond.edu.

Thank you for serving as an Osher Institute class/activity/discussion group leader. We hope you will enjoy teaching or leading an activity or discussion group as much as we and the Osher members will enjoy their time with you.

Sincerely,

Peggy Watson, Director
Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
University of Richmond



Who We Are

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Richmond, School of Continuing Studies, was established in 2004 through a grant and a subsequent endowment from the Bernard Osher Foundation of San Francisco. The Osher Institute provides intellectual stimulation and civic engagement for a vibrant community of like-minded students age 50 and better.

Our Values

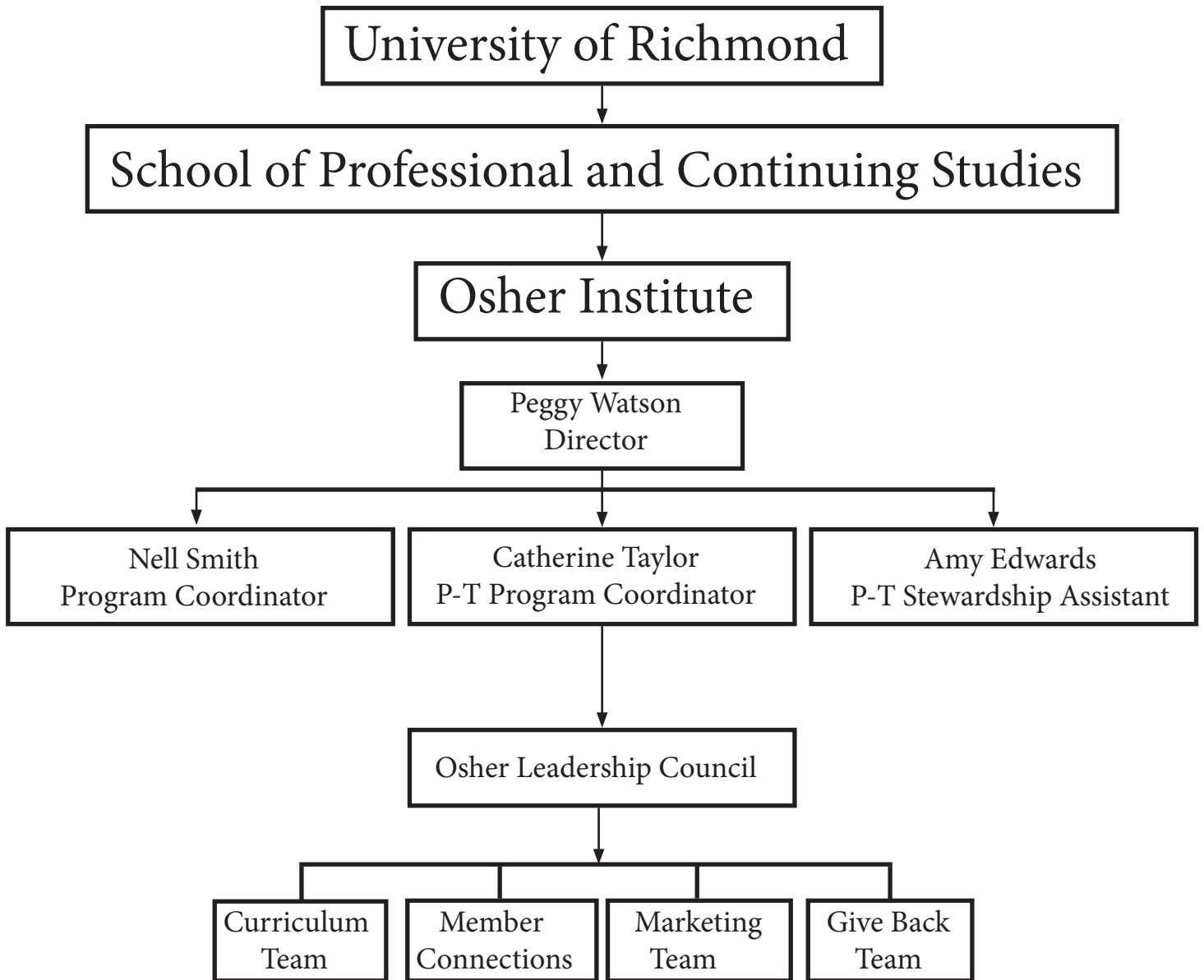
We support healthy aging. Our programs are organized around the notion that older adults require intellectual stimulation, physical activity, and social engagement. We also value life experience: to that end, the majority of our programs are led by older adult volunteers. Learning is for the sake of learning; our programs issue no grades or credit; there are no prerequisites to participating other than a desire to learn.

Our Mission

As the University of Richmond is a prestigious liberal arts institution, our courses and programs “mirror” those of university. We provide programs directed toward the enrichment of life through continued learning. The members are the primary resources of the Osher Institute, together with those of the university and the community at-large, are utilized in bringing their collective body of knowledge and talents to the participants.



Our Organization





Our Osher Institute Course Leaders

Many of the Osher Institute's course leaders have never actually taught. They are engineers, doctors, investors, lawyers, musicians, both professionals and amateurs, who are excited about their fields of interest and who wish to improve their knowledge of teaching and their teaching skills in order to more effectively engage their students. Because teaching and leading mature adults is different from teaching and leading children and college-aged students, we offer a short introductory workshop to identify interests and skills and provide instruction and materials to those who have an area of expertise to share and who wish to more effectively engage our members in that process.

Adults and Learning

We are focused on the concepts of andragogy.

Andragogy is the process of engaging adult learners. The term was developed into a theory of adult education by Malcolm Knowles, noted American authority on adult education, whose ideas include:

- Adults need to be involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction.
- Experience plays an important part in adult learning. Through their experiences, adult learners connect to new material and stretch their knowledge base.
- Adult learning is more self-directed and autonomous. The leader acts more as guide to lead learners to knowledge rather than simply supplying facts. Many times leaders are learning as students are learning because the process is more of an unfolding of knowledge than mere learning of facts.

The What of Andragogy

Demands of Learner	Learner must balance life responsibilities with the demands of learning.
Role of Leader	Learners are autonomous and self-directed. Leaders guide the learners to their own knowledge rather than supplying them with facts.
Life Experience	Learners have a tremendous amount of life experiences. They need to connect to their knowledge base. They must recognize the value of their learning.
Purpose for Learning	Learners are goal oriented and know why they are learning new information.
Permanence of Learning	Learning is self initiated and tends to last a long time.

Adapted from Green, J. (1998). *Andragogy: Teaching Adults*. In B. Hoffman (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology*

General Considerations

Copyrighted Materials

You should be aware that material you copy for use by your class may be copyrighted. Improper usage of this copied material without permission is illegal.

However, "fair use" by an educational organization – Osher Institute classes - may be exempted, and allowed if certain conditions are met. The factors by which to assess whether or not your materials come under "fair use" are whether they are:

- 1) for educational purposes and do not have an economic effect;
- 2) essentially factual, rather than creative in nature;

- 3) used verbatim, without being transformed;
- 4) a small portion of the total work from which they are extracted; and
- 5) are properly attributed, including source and authorship.

If the Classroom is Locked

Please call the UR police non-emergency at 287-8715 to unlock classroom (they have a list of all assigned classrooms and are supposed to unlock them, but sometimes a door gets closed after it's opened).

Our Teaching and Group Leading Philosophy

We seek and promote "Peer Leaders."

The Osher Institute at the University of Richmond is strengthened by individuals who volunteer their time to teach or lead groups for the pure love of their subject, and perhaps the love of teaching. The Osher Institute at UR is you and your ability to create, teach, and deliver a learning experience for the senior learner.

The learning experience is further enhanced when students are engaged through role playing, teaching, and socialization with other students. Our students are unlike any other. They bring a wealth of knowledge with them and serve as a vital resource to the classes or group success.

Preparation for Your Class/Activity/Discussion:

Set realistic and basic objectives; remember that less is more. You have a limited number of contact hours with your students. Your objective is to familiarize, to challenge current thinking, and to expand horizons. If your topic is very complex, consider narrowing or limiting its scope so that you can cover it in more depth.

Prepare an outline. Once you have set objectives, determine how you will accomplish them. What will you cover in your class sessions? In what sequence will you present your ideas? What methods will you use? Limit your points to the absolutely essential items so that you will have time to discuss them fully.

Consider how you will communicate needed information, such as facts or statistics, and how you plan to use audiovisual materials. Are your audiovisual materials the focus of the learning? They are much more effective when used to support or illustrate learning points.



Class Leader Guidelines

Introduction

The Osher Institute at the University of Richmond offers courses which reflect the liberal arts focus of our sponsoring institution during fall, spring, and summer sessions. The courses cover numerous and varied areas, including history, literature, music, and science.

Class leaders play a vital role in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute program. Their importance to the success of the Osher Institute cannot be overstated. They stimulate intellectual curiosity, continued learning, cultural enrichment, and participation in the varied offerings of the Osher Institute. They are the core element in the success of this organization.

We recognize that our class leaders come from a wide range of backgrounds, interests, and experience. Many have never actually taught. They are excited about their fields of interest and wish to improve their knowl-

edge of teaching and their teaching skills in order to more effectively engage their students. Their suggestions and ideas constitute a distillation of practical experience. Therefore, these guidelines were prepared, not as a detailed instruction manual, but as an aid. We believe that these suggestions will enhance your enjoyment and increase your confidence as an Osher Institute facilitator.

The class leaders plan and organize the class to be offered, and through their leadership, work to provide an enjoyable learning experience for the participants. There are priceless rewards in being an Osher Institute facilitator, such as:

- The opportunity to be of service to your fellow Osher Institute members.
- Increased knowledge of the subject matter through preparation for classes.
- The personal satisfaction of achievement.

Creating a Class

Thank you for your interest in teaching for the Osher Institute! We use the term "leader" instead of "teacher" because we promote a peer instruction approach to learning through which Osher Institute members are encouraged to share their passion for learning with fellow Osher Institute members.

You can take your idea and passion for a subject to the next level by becoming a peer class "leader." Our courses are similar in type to the University of Richmond academic offerings in the liberal arts, leadership, science, law, business, and wellness. The Osher Institute leader orientation is offered twice each academic year.

The first step is to develop a course and lecture description and complete the **Osher Course/Lecture Planning Guide & Proposal**. This form is available online at <http://spcs.richmond.edu/osher/schedule/course-proposal.html>.

Acceptance and Scheduling

The **Osher Course/Lecture Planning Guide & Proposal** will be reviewed by the Osher Institute director. The number of sessions and length of each session for the course/lecture will be established. Once this has been completed and the course/lecture is accepted, the course/lecture leader will be contacted for scheduling in an Osher Institute academic term.

Audio-Video Needs/Availability

When you complete the **Osher Course/Lecture Planning Guide & Proposal**, you will identify any needs for AV equipment. Most university classrooms are equipped with a computer connected to a large screen video projector for projecting a powerpoint presentation or other video images with sound, i.e. a DVD, jump drive, etc. The classroom assigned for your class will have the AV equipment needed.

It is suggested that you visit the classroom before your class to familiarize yourself with the use of the AV equipment before your first scheduled class session. Check with the Osher office before you visit the classroom to be sure it is available for you.

- **Audio Visual questions:** you may have Osher students with AV skills, or call UR telecom (phone in classroom with number by phone); this phone may also be used in an emergency and to make campus and local calls
- **Osher staff:**
 - Peggy Watson, 287-6344, margaret.watson@richmond.edu
 - Nell Smith, 287-6608, nsmith3@richmond.edu
 - Catherine Taylor, 289-8582, ctaylor6@richmond.edu
 - Amy Edwards, 287-1946, aedwards@richmond.edu

Class Packet

Prior to the first session of your class, you should stop by the Osher office to pick up the class packet, if a class assistant has not been assigned to your class. Take a few moments to review it before your first class session.

The packet includes the following items:

- Class roster which students initial for each class date attended
- Several copies of the current Osher schedule of classes
- Name tents and marker; students print, large letters, first name on tent

Class Instructions

During the First Class

- As students enter classroom, recruit one student (if you don't have a class assistant) to help you with a few things (see notes on list above)
- Introduce yourself
- Mention location of rest rooms, phone; remind all about parking in assigned lots or you may get a ticket; no parking allowed in visitor spaces for Osher Members, must park in paved space, no parking on grassy areas.



Discussion/Activity Leader Guidelines

Format of a Discussion/Activity Group

There is no specific format for a group as long as the central component is the discussion. The format is best determined by evaluating your group and its objectives. Feel free to create a format that suits each specific topic to be discussed or activity, and that reflects the needs and desires of the group. For example,

- invite a speaker or several speakers to one meeting to address the topic.
- another week, read and discuss a novel or paper related to the discussion at hand.
- view the television series that accompanies the topic or screen a documentary or even a feature film.
- be creative in the format, as the success of the dialogue depends on it.

The following techniques are suggestions for starting the discussion/activity group and maintaining its focus. (Not all may apply to certain groups/activities.)

- **Set the agenda.** State the discussion topic at the beginning of the meeting. This can be done by the leader, a group participant or an invited guest speaker. This introduction may take the form of an oral summary or it may be a written handout listing the discussion relating to the topic. This technique is particularly useful in starting and focusing the discussion. Additionally, this can put the participants on a more equal footing and reassure those less confident about their grasp of the topic/issues.
- **Start each session with a brief review** of the previous group meeting. This is best done by a participant and will refresh the memories of those who reviewed the session's material and include those who did not. Recapitulation of the main points will also provide a framework for the discussion.

- **Diversify sources of information.** Encourage group members to seek information from as wide a variety of sources as possible and to share the information with the group.
- **Disentangle the topic.** If it is a complex topic for discussion, break down the discussion topic into separate parts rather than allow participants to discuss everything at once. This is an effective method for managing a controversial or complex topic while at the same time maintaining order in the discussion.
- **Establish ground rules.**
 - Everyone gets an opportunity to speak once before giving opinions, facts, etc. a second time.
 - One person speaks at a time. Some leaders find it helpful to have members raise their hands and be recognized before speaking.

Strategies for Stimulating Discussion

Books have been written on the skills a group leader may use to stimulate group discussion. Not to worry. We'll keep it brief.

- Guest speakers can bring different perspectives to the topic at hand and provide in-depth understanding of the issues discussed.
- Audio/visual materials can also stimulate follow-up discussion.
- Summarize any reading assignment at beginning of class. Point out some of the significant or relevant points the author makes as a lead-in to discussion.
- Frame open-ended questions based on the reading assignment. Some group leaders use the "Socratic method," which is based on posing open-ended questions and presenting problematic situations related to the reading assignment. "Open-ended" questions literally open up discussion. Avoid questions that can simply be answered with a "yes" or "no."
- Most often, open-ended questions begin with words like: "How...," "Why...," "Who...," "What...," "Explain...," "Tell us about..." More on this later.
- Offer encouragement. Nods, a smile, a thank you, a follow-up question, e.g. "tell us more," or "explain further."
- You might ask individuals for reports, verbal or written, to be presented to the class. These should be short and may provide deeper insight into a specific area covered in the class.
- Reviewing the previous week's reading and discussion can reinforce continuity and understanding.
- Don't be afraid to inject controversial issues into the discussion.
- Encourage supplemental reading and research.
- Discussion group members will often bring in articles from newspapers or magazines that relate to the subject being discussed in class. Plan for a few minutes at the beginning of class so that these can be addressed.
- Identify and utilize discussion group members' backgrounds and expertise.
- Prepare handouts on a particular area under discussion in order to stimulate more focused attention and discussion.
- Some discussion leaders have found it helpful to provide questions for the following week's reading assignment as a means to assist class members in focusing on key points.
- Another discussion leader has found it helpful to start classes with a colloquy between the leader and the author. For example, finding a passage in the day's text that they can "passionately" agree or disagree with, or bringing a related incident or other author to mind, and reading the passage aloud with the leader's own observations, is usually sufficient to stimulate spirited discussion.

Managing the Discussion

Maintaining control is the key to solving many problems that may arise. You are in charge, so don't hesitate to exercise your leader role.

Keep discussion focused on the session's topic. Straying too far could cause each session to lose its unique value. A delicate balance is best: don't force the group to stick to the topic too rigidly, but don't allow the discussion to drift. Most people do not regard a "bull session" as a valuable use of their time.

Try not to see conflict as a personal matter. Encourage members of the group to interact with each other and not address all comments to you. Remember the goals should be reasoning together, clarifying issues, and enhancing understanding, not necessarily reaching consensus.

Draw out quiet participants. Do not allow anyone to sit quietly in the corner or to be forgotten by the group. It may be helpful to speak with the member outside of class to determine how he or she wishes to participate. Some people are more comfortable speaking in later sessions. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

- Encourage those who are shy or reluctant to speak during discussions.
- Look for those who show through body language that they have a question or a comment to make. A good group leader has a "roving eye," taking note of what's going on with each class member.
- Pose a question that draws on personal experience, moving around the room encouraging each class member to participate. For example, "What do each of you remember about living during the Depression?" (Great open-ended question.)
 - Open Ended Questions:
What are your reactions to _____?
 - Diagnostic Questions:
What is your analysis of _____?
What conclusions did you draw from _____?
 - Information Seeking Questions:
What? Where? When? How? Why? Kinds of questions.
 - Challenge/Testing Questions:
Why do you believe that?
What evidence supports your conclusions?
What arguments might be developed to counter that point of view?
 - Action Questions:
What needs to be done to (implement, finalize, improve, and create policy.....)?
 - Questions on Priority & Sequence:
Given certain facts, what are the first, second, third steps to be taken?
 - Prediction Questions:
If your conclusions are correct, what might be the reaction of or to....?
 - Hypothetical Question:
What would happen if.....?
 - Questions of Extension:
What are the implications of your conclusions about.....?
- Note comments made earlier by participants and refer back to those individuals in order to draw them into the discussion at hand.
- Sometimes, individuals simply need your recognition and encouragement with a question that will help them get into the discussion. It should be remembered, however, that some class members prefer not to enter into the discussion at all and would feel uncomfortable if singled out for a comment.
- Be an active listener. You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide

the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

- Why do some class members not respond to questions posed by the group leader?
 - Need more time to think, are bashful or think they may be wrong. They have a fear of not verbalizing well.
 - Group leader discourages by signaling a specific answer he or she has in mind, or simply cuts off participant with correction.
 - Group leader may talk too much or too long.
 - Group Leader does not pause and rephrase when there is no immediate response.
- Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate. Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen, the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.
 - Deal with those who tend to dominate the discussion. (It's okay to assert yourself here – remember who the leader is.)
 - Know when to intervene (or just plain interrupt). Some strategies:
 - “Thank you, good point, however, so-and-so has a comment.”
 - “Let's hear what someone else has to say on this point.”
 - “Interesting viewpoint, now let's move on.”

The Final Group Session

Group leader should stress the importance of completing the online evaluation. If class members understand the importance of the evaluations, they may complete them more conscientiously. These are helpful not only to the group leader, but also provide useful feedback to the Curriculum Team. Members of the group may offer:

- Recommendations for new courses to be offered.
- Suggestions for new course leaders and how to recruit.

Thank you for your willingness to share your passion with others!