

COLLEGE FOR OLDER ADULTS--Fall 2026
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
1 Partnership Circle, Abingdon, VA 24210
276-619-4300, 276-619-4377, www.swcenter.edu/COA



General Class Information

Class Registration

1. Online Registration

Visit www.swcenter.edu/coa to view the registration forms. You can register and pay for classes using a credit card.

2. In-Person Registration

Printed registration forms and course descriptions are available at the Higher Education Center Information desk. Payments can be made by credit card, cash, or check.

3. Registration Day

Register for COA classes during the in-person Registration Day Event. Payment options include credit card, cash, or check. Class descriptions will be available, and some instructors will be present to answer questions.

Important Notes

- Membership is \$40 and payment must be paid at the time of registration. Your registration fee covers any and all classes offered during the term and not per lecture.
- We encourage payment of the COA membership fee by credit card for faster refunds if necessary. Refunds for payments made by check or cash may take several weeks!
- No refund requests will be honored after the first day of a class.
- Some classes have limited numbers and will be filled on a first come/first served basis. If the class is full, you will be contacted, otherwise you will not be contacted.
- By registering for classes, you grant permission for your photo to be taken and used for COA promotional purposes.

Room Assignments

Room locations are subject to change based on enrollment size or scheduling conflicts. Please check posted notices daily for updates.

Lunch Option

Local caterers have been invited to offer grab-and-go lunches during the one-hour break. Meals are available on a first-come, first-served basis. The menu will be posted.

Inclement Weather Use your best judgment about travel safety during inclement weather.

Schedule changes will be announced on public media such as:

- Our website: www.swcenter.edu
- WCYB-TV
- Text alert

The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center uses HEC Alerts to immediately contact you during a major crisis, emergency, significant incident, or operational schedule change. To receive notifications, subscribers must enroll a mobile phone number for SMS text alerts. When an incident or emergency occurs, authorized senders will instantly notify you using HEC Alerts. HEC Alerts will provide you with real-time updates in the event of an emergency or other critical incident. SMS (Text Message Enrollment). Go to <https://goo.gl/waa48N> to enroll your mobile phone number to receive HEC Alerts.

Emergency Procedures

In case of emergency, evacuate the building calmly.

- The elevator will be out of service.
- If assistance is needed, go to a stairwell and wait for help.
- Do not open the stairwell door at the west end of the building unless it is a true emergency.

Transportation

Transportation information is available at District Three's website, <https://district-three.org/index.php/Town-of-Abingdon> Note: The Higher Education Center only provides a bus stop; it does not control the bus schedule, personnel, or related publications.

COA Motto: We must be patient with one another.

Questions? Contact Ed Morgan at emorgan@swcenter.edu or (276) 619-4377.

When registering in person, check the box for your course choices on the Registration form and mark them on the Course Descriptions pages. **Turn in the Registration Form and KEEP the Course Descriptions for your records.**

Course Descriptions

Monday Classes

Dates	Time	Class	Instructor
9/21-10/19	10:00-11:30 AM	Chair Yoga	Allison Linder

Whitetop Yoga instructor, Allison Linder, offers Yoga for all! Using a chair for stability support will improve your strength, flexibility, and mobility through modified yoga posture. The class focusses on how to connect your movement to your breath, supporting your respiratory and digestive health while helping you move. Chairs are provided. Please bring your own yoga mat to place under your chair.

9/21	10:00-11:30 AM	Ayurveda--The Study or Knowledge of Life	Jacqui Pile
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Ayurveda—What is it? Translated as the “Study or Knowledge of Life”, this ancient practice originated in India and is considered to be the “sister science to Yoga”. Through the teachings of Ayurveda, we learn how to live in alignment with nature, taking a holistic approach to living your best life! I hope that you will join Jacqui Pile as we explore the basic understanding of what Ayurveda is and how it may be supportive to you!

9/21 12:30-2:00 PM Curiosity--From Wonder To Wisdom Zane Scott

We are all curious as babies, fascinated by every new face, sound, and shiny object. But that is only the beginning. When curiosity is nurtured, our early hunger for novelty can mature into a lifelong desire to understand: to discover the gaps in our knowledge, explore the world around us, and better comprehend the people who share it with us. Curiosity can deepen learning, enrich relationships, stimulate creativity, and help us engage more thoughtfully with the complicated issues of our time. Along the way, however, curiosity encounters powerful enemies. Certainty can be a mass murderer of curiosity—and questions are among our most effective weapons against it and curiosity's other enemies. Curiosity needn't die or even decrease as we age if we know how to fight back. Come join us as we move from certainty and settled assumptions toward better questions, investigation, connection, and mature understanding. We will explore how curiosity works, what strengthens or suppresses it, and how we can improve the questions we ask. Above all, we will consider why a truly curious life requires both intellectual humility and disciplined effort—and how wonder, carefully cultivated, can grow into wisdom.

9/28 10:00-11:30 AM Appalachian Sustainable Development Sylvia Crum

Join Sylvia Crum, Director of Development at Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) to learn about this impactful organization's 31 year history and the exciting future it faces. Sylvia will share the ASD origin story, program focus areas, impacts, and also plans for the future as the organization is on the cusp of an organizational expansion and is developing a transformative agriculture campus in Washington County, VA. Be prepared to enjoy a power point, campus master site plan renderings, and a lively question and answer session! Delivered with passion and transparency, this talk will leave you proud to know this "home grown" non-profit and the important work it does in our region.

9/28 12:30-2:00 PM Old World Ballads & the Mountain Dulcimer Jack Hinshelwood

Jack Hinshelwood has performed, recorded, composed, and produced Appalachian music for over 50 years. On Monday, September 28, Jack will present "Old World Ballads & the Mountain Dulcimer," a multi-media and concert program celebrating the life and important musical contributions of Abingdon native Andrew Rowan Summers. Summers was born in 1912 and loved music from an early age. He attended the 1931 White Top Folk Festival and it was there that he discovered his passion for ballad singing and playing the mountain dulcimer. For the remainder of his life, he actively collected and performed ballads while accompanying himself on the dulcimer. Through his performances on recordings, radio, TV, and in concert in the US and abroad, Andrew Summers helped many thousands of people appreciate the importance of ballads as a means of preserving cultural histories, and the elegant simplicity of the mountain dulcimer as an instrument for accompanying the songs.

10/5 10:00-3:00 PM Community Health Fair Various Speakers

Explore healthy aging resources, attend educational sessions led by local physicians and other healthcare professionals. Topics include-accessible technology for independence, podiatry, over the counter medications, urology, women's health, brain health and dementia, and community accessibility, health screenings, and community resources. Tour the virtual Cadaver Lab and health simulations facilities. Vaccinations available through the Kroger Pharmacy. The day's activities include a concurrent disability awareness and resource event brought to you by the Appalachian Independence Center and Emory & Henry School of Health Sciences for individuals of all ages and abilities. Discover tools, services, and support that open doors to independence. Complete your Wellness Day Passport for a chance to win prizes. Food trucks and refreshments available.

10/12 10:00-11:30 AM Appalachian Weather Brianna Cornett

Weather Lore of Southwest Virginia. Forgotten Storms, Sayings and Phenomena. This class will explore the atmospheric patterns and signs our ancestors watched and how modern day science compares. We will also recall some historic storms that have defined our area- but may have been forgotten over the years. And lastly, we will discover weather phenomena that excites our everyday lives along with those which are unique to the Appalachian Mountains.

10/12 10:00-11:30 AM Barter Theatre Behind the Scenes Tour Kaylie Kyle

Barter Staff member Kaylie Kyle guides us on a backstage tour of Abingdon's world famous theatre. Learn about Robert Porterfield and the founding of the theatre. Visit the dressing rooms, and wardroom where actors transform into stage characters. We will see the stage setups for Come from Away and Dracula. Be careful of the trap doors!

10/12 12:30-2:00 PM Finding Calm in the Middle of Chaos Jane Hill

"Finding Calm in the Middle of Chaos". Rapid change in our current information age has the potential to present as chaos. Is there an anchor in these turbulent seas of change and transformation? How do we make it through the storms? There are readily available skills to help us maintain our physical and mental health in these seemingly chaotic times. We will review easy and effective mind/ body skills for finding calm in this storm of change. These skills are thousands of years old but as new and effective as the most recent research on vibrant health. Jane Hill, PhD, is a retired physical therapist and taught Kripalu Yoga (meditation in motion) for thirty years.

10/19 10:00-11:30 AM The Women of Genesis from a Feminist Perspective Mary Darcy

Women of Genesis. This course studies the matriarchs of Genesis: their power and powerlessness, and the underdiscussed issues of gender in scripture. Women to be considered include: Sarah, Hagar, Leah, Rachel, Zilpah, and Bilhah. Sarah is the wife of Abraham and the progenitor of Israel as she gives birth to Issac, the grandfather of the twelve tribes of Israel. She is, however, abused by Abraham. Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave, gives birth to Ishmael who is the progenitor of the people who become the Arabs. Hagar suffers under the abuse of Sarah. Leah and Rachael are the daughters of Laban and primary wives of Jacob. They are able to assert themselves over Laban and Jacob despite the maltreatment of both. Laban gave each of his daughters handmaiden slaves, Zilpah and Bilhah, who had no rights of their own and were not able to raise their children as they were considered to be the children of Leah and Rachael. Hagar, Zilpah, and Bilhah were forced into reproductive servitude, emotional and physical abuse, and, in Hagar's case, forced exile. Abraham sends Hagar into the desert of Beersheba where she was able to provide for her son through divine intervention. She became the progenitor of the Arab people.

10/19 12:30-2:00 PM Protect Your Money. Invest Wisely Carmen Clifford

In 2025, investment fraud caused monetary losses over \$8.6 Billion, with seniors suffering one third of the losses. Carmen Clifford, Training and Outreach Coordinator with the State Corporation Commission Division of Securities and Retail Franchising will teach us the basics of Investing Wisely. She will discuss the origins of securities regulation, the difference between federal and state securities regulation, the role of the State Corporation Commission and its Division of Securities and Retail Franchising. We will learn how to check the registration status of securities professionals, how to read a brokerage statement, identify the red flags of investment fraud, and how to contact the Division with questions or to file a complaint. She will review the main types of investment fraud and stats and discuss relationship scams--the main type of investment fraud among seniors in the US.

TUESDAY MORNINGS

9/15-10/20 10:00-11:30 AM Systems Thinking

Zane Scott

Why Things Happen: Seeing the Systems Behind Our Problems, Decisions, and Their Unintended Consequences. Why do smart people make bad decisions? How do organizations produce unintended consequences? The answers to those and other important questions lie in understanding and using what Peter Senge called the "Fifth Discipline" and Donella Meadows advocated as thinking in Systems." In this introduction to Systems Thinking, we will explore the concepts and building blocks of the systems that make up our world and all of its problems and solutions. With the pioneering systems thinkers as our guides, we will learn how to put systems thinking to work in our lives as we solve problems, build organizations, and make decisions.

9/15-10/20 10:00-11:30 AM Searching for Wellness Through Fragmentation and Loss **David Hever**

The baby-boomer generation has seen more cultural and social changes than any previous generation. This includes the widespread loss of confidence in institutions, both religious and civic, combined with the loss of intimate relationships through the attrition of aging and death and a weakening of communal support. We may be left feeling bereft and forlorn as individuals in our final years negotiating our increasing limitations but still needing a way to "make sense of it all". In this course, the facilitator will provide insights from a wide review of literature, religious writings, and recent developments in brain research as well as his experience of forty years as a therapist to stimulate participants' own reflections on how they are making sense of it all. David R. Hever LPC is a co-owner of a private agency that provides therapeutic foster care and a range of auxiliary mental health and substance use services in Southwest Virginia. He grew up and was educated in Ireland with degrees in English Literature, Philosophy and Theology along with a Masters from Appalachian State University.

9/15-10/20 10:00-11:30 AM We the Jury Find...Great Trials in Fact and Fiction **Cindy Pojeta**

This course combines my vocation (attorney) and avocation (love of literature) in a unique way. Each session will have a theme. I will present the facts, arguments, and verdicts of a couple of famous trials, and the court room scenes from a work of fiction. For instance, the first session, "Rage Against the State", will include the treason trial of Socrates and the conspiracy trial of the Chicago Eight, along with the court room scenes from A Tale of Two Cities by Charles Dickens. Other famous cases we will examine include: The Salem Witch Trials, The Scopes Monkey Trial, Sam Sheppard, OJ Simpson, Nuremberg, My Lai, Leopold and Loeb, The Manson Family Murders, Amistad, and the assassination of Medgar Evers. Other fictional works include: The Scarlet Letter, Rita Hayworth and Shawshank Redemption, A Few Good Men, The Stranger, and To Kill a Mockingbird.

9/15-10/20 10:00-11:30 AM Natural Heritage Series

Various Speakers

Our Natural Heritage. This series explores the wildlife, plants, geologic features, and endangered species of Southwest Virginia. Our speakers are experts on the flora and fauna of this region. They will enlighten you to the wonderful diversity of life and landscape in this place we call home.

9/15	Session 1	Dragonflies and Damselflies of Southwest Virginia	Chris Allgyer
9/22	Session 2	River Cane	Adam Griffith
9/29	Session 3	Native Grasslands and Restoration	Jordan Coscia
10/6	Session 4	Mushrooms	Lee Borg
10/13	Session 5	Living with Wildlife	Brandon Bernhardt
10/20 or 10/27	Session 6	Birds of Prey of Southwest Virginia	Caylen Wolfer

TUESDAY AFTERNOONS

9/15-10/20 12:30-2:00 PM The Suffrage Movement

Linda Davidson

The best protection for any woman is to have the courage and the moral strength to persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty. Despite extraordinary medical advances throughout history, 800 women still die every day from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth. There are only 70 girls enrolled for every 100 boys in tertiary level of education in some countries. This disproportionately affects women and girls' health, employment, and safety resulting in millions of women still living in poverty. Women are integral to lasting peace. Studies show there is a 35 per cent greater chance of peace agreements lasting 15 years when women participate. Yet women are still largely absent from the peace table. Evidence from economics, public health, and development studies supports the view that gender equality benefits everyone, from households to nations. In ancient Greece and republican Rome, as well as in the few democracies that had emerged in Europe by the end of the 18th century, women were excluded from voting. Women's voting rights finally became an issue in the late 19th century, and the struggle started being intense in Great Britain and the United States. This class will delve into the start of a fire called WOMEN SUFFRAGE.

9/15-10/20 12:30-2:00 PM Cell Phone Basics and Beyond: iPhones

Sonia Vanhook

Please join Sonia Vanhook for a course on the iPhone. Learn which apps come with the phone and which ones you should download. Find out many of the things the iPhone can do. It is a computer that fits in the palm of your hand.

9/15-10/20 12:30-2:00 PM Gastro-intestinal Health

Andrea Wann

Gastrointestinal "Gut" Health: An educational series on how the gastrointestinal tract can impact our health. This six-class series is educational content only and is not a treatment plan for anyone with a pre-existing condition.

9/15-10/20 12:30-2:00 PM Appreciating Astronomy

Jim Warden

Appreciating Astronomy. Did you ever take a course in music appreciation? You might recall that you covered topics from folk to symphony, styles and instruments, and emotional responses, while you listened to lots of music. We're taking the same approach to appreciating some details about astronomy in this course. For example, how are planets made? What do stars have to do with us? Locally, there is much to ponder about Earth's formation and location, its different eras, its cultivation and protection of life, and its fragile existence among enormous structures and dangerous sources of energy. In this course we hope to broaden your cosmic view a bit aided by tools such as orbiting telescopes, robot spacecraft, spectral analyzers, and computer modeling, all developed mostly during your lifetime, accompanied by lots of photos. Your questions and suggestions for future topics are welcome. Instructor, James Warden, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Physics Emeritus Emory & Henry College.

9/15-10/20 12:30-2:00 PM Actors Reading Theatre

James Kroll

Please join us for our Finally Ready for Prime Time Players as we explore the excitement of acting. We will work on breathing, diction, and vocal techniques, all related to the spoken word (don't forget the cork) while we read the works of various playwrights. This will lead us to the final, where we will perform in front of a live audience to share the fruits of our labor. Friends, family and the general public will be invited to enjoy our journey. Hope to see you there.

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS

9/16-10/21 10:00-11:30 AM From Novel to Film--Dracula

Sally Jones

Dracula has stalked the imagination of both literary and popular culture since its publication in 1897, as attested by its enduring popularity and the scores of adaptations that have been made into film. Let's read this novel together and watch a movie to discover what is so seductive and what is so vile about Dracula.

9/16-10/21 10:00-11:30 AM Looking at Suffering Through a Literary Lens

Theresa Burriss

Throughout time, the written word has invited readers into worlds they may never inhabit, experiences they may never face. Profound literature, whether fiction or nonfiction, possesses the power to transform readers as they cultivate empathy and understanding of others' lived experiences. Often, in the process, readers are prompted into deep self-reflection. For this six-week period, we will read the following works in this order (two weeks per text): Ann Petry's novel, *The Street*, which takes place in 1940s Harlem; Carter Sickels's novel, *The Prettiest Star*, based in a small Appalachian Ohio town in 1986; and Carmen Bugar's memoir, *Burying the Typewriter*, focused on her Romanian family's plight under Ceaușescu. Although each work is vastly different, taking place in different geographic locations and in various eras, all three authors expose systemic oppressions and convey complex, at times contradictory, human responses and reactions. Self-reflective readers are left wondering how they would respond in such circumstances, as well as how they may act in their present and future lives.

9/16-10/21 10:00-11:30 AM Traveling Tales

Various Speakers

Traveling Tales—Eileen Garner. A taste of the exotic has found its way to Abingdon. Local folks share memories of their travels.

9/16 Session 1	Islands of S.E. Asia The Philippines and Palu	Ted Pile
9/23 Session 2	Exploring Poland	Paul Conco
9/30 Session 3	Exploring Mark Twain's River: Cruising the Mississippi	Cindy Pojeta
10/7 Session 4	Cruising From India To South Africa and Islands	Eileen Garner
10/14 Session 5	Majestic Japan	Vernon Miles
10/21 Session 6	The ABC Islands, Florida and the Everglades	Ellen Mueller

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOONS

9/16-10/21 12:30-2:00 PM AI Made Easy

Brenda K. Uekert

Artificial intelligence is showing up everywhere, and it's a lot less mysterious than it sounds. This course is member-driven — we'll take our cues from what you want to accomplish, with fun projects along the way: planning a trip itinerary, drafting a letter to family, decoding an insurance document, spotting a scam before it costs you. We'll also look honestly at where AI falls short — its environmental cost, the ethics of how it's trained, its impact on the labor force, and the ways it can mislead as easily as it helps. No technical background required, no grades, no homework, just curiosity. Brenda K. Uekert, PhD, is a sociologist, writer, and researcher who recently spent months as a contractor stress-testing AI models for a major technology company.

9/16-10/21 12:30-2:00 PM Beginning Story Telling**Donnamarie Emmert**

Storyteller Donnamarie Emmert, best known as Abingdon's Haint Mistress, has been telling stories for nearly thirty years. She will teach you how to tell a story that will entertain and enlighten your audience whether it is among friends and family or on a professional stage. Week 1: Foundations of Story: Introduction to oral tradition, the elements of a good story (Character, Context, Conflict, Climax, Closure), and the role of the listener. Week 2-3: What Makes a Good Storyteller? Techniques and Skills: Focus on performance techniques including voice, gesture, audience interaction, and using repetition and strong imagery. Week 4-5: Personal Narrative and Application: Students develop and workshop their own personal stories and explore how storytelling is used in professional contexts. Week 6: Final Performances & Reflection: Students present their final with follow up discussion.

9/16-10/21 12:30-2:00 PM Appalachian Modernism**Brandon Story**

Appalachia is often considered a place stuck in time or left behind by the modern world, but this course will consider multiple ways Appalachia participated in the American 20th century by looking at examples of Modernist architecture, music, and literature located in the Appalachian Mountains and imagination. Topics include Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, Martha Graham and Aaron Copland's Appalachian Spring, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and books by Thomas Wolfe, James Still, Lee Smith, and Cormac McCarthy.

9/16-10/21 12:30-2:00 PM Wildflower Gardening--Autumn the Unsung Season**Snow Ferreniea**

The course will focus on the plethora of amazing plants that will thrive in our gardens and fill them with color during the late summer and fall. The fall season is so overlooked, beyond the brilliant colors of the leaves of trees, primarily maples. The class will review enlarging existing borders, as well as locating and creating new ones.

THURSDAY MORNINGS**9/17-10/22 10:00-11:30 AM Genealogy Lab****Paula Moad**

Paula Moad guides class members on how to use internet genealogy resources: DNA testing, newspaper archives, and public records to find lost relatives, construct a family tree, and gather their family history and stories. Basic computer skills are required for this class!

9/17-10/22 10:00-11:30 AM Android Phone for the Absolute Beginner**Eddie Copenhaver**

Android for Absolute Beginners. Do you have an Android phone but aren't really comfortable using it? Maybe you just got your first smartphone, or you've had one for years but only use a few of its features. The class is designed for people with little or no Android experience. We'll take our time, practice what we learn, and build on those skills from one class to the next. Android phones vary, so your phone may not look exactly like the instructor's—and that's okay. Bring your Android phone to class. No previous smartphone experience is required.

9/17-10/22 10:00-11:30 AM Short Stories by Alice Munro: The Moons of Jupiter**Judith Wylie**

We will be reading, studying, and discussing the short stories found in Alice Munro's collection *The Moons of Jupiter*. Munro, having won almost every literary prize offered both in the U.S. and Canada, where she was born and resided, capped her career with the prestigious Nobel Prize for Literature. Reviews praise *The Moons of Jupiter* for its emotional depth, precise realism, and masterly insights. Indeed, the characters who populate these Alice Munro stories live and breathe, and I believe will evoke a lively literary discussion. This is not a lecture class. Plan to read closely, ask questions, discuss, and draw your own conclusions, analysis, and meanings. For the first class, please read "Connection."

9/17-10/22 10:00-11:30 AM The Road Trip That Never Leaves the Building Monica Hoel

The Road Trip (which never leaves the building) is on a journey for unexpected beauty in unexpected places. We are surrounded by an amazing world -- we need only have our eyes open and have our hearts ready to learn. Our speakers will discuss everything from the railroad to collard greens -- with a dive into incredible tiny fishes, a look at beautiful stained glass, a rustle of fall leaves, and a fascinating float with butterflies. We're also planning field trips! Join us at 10:00 AM on Thursdays!

THURSDAY AFTERNOONS

9/17-10/22 12:30-2:00 PM Resilience: Survive and Thrive in Tough Times and Places Richard Moyer

Wherever we travel on earth; plants, animals, fungi, and microbes abound. Many are overlooked; our 'hidden biodiversity'. Which organisms grow near our homes and public spaces, yet also in harsh places around the world? What might we learn from how they thrive? How do they benefit other organisms within their shared space? Each week we'll consider one type of plant or animal--through sight, touch, taste or smell.

9/17-10/22 12:30-2:00 PM Religion in Appalachia David Rouse

Popular media outlets have often portrayed Appalachian religion as dominated by snake handlers and faith healers. While these are to be found, religion in Appalachia is far more diverse than popularly portrayed. This course will explore the history and diversity of religion in the region.

9/17-10/22 12:30-2:00 PM Art Documentaries Laken Bridges

What is the role of an artist, and what is their social responsibility? What makes art "good art"? Is the message, materials, or make more important? Do self-taught art, folk art, and intuitive art get the recognition they deserve? What can we excuse in the name of art? And can we really "love the art, hate the artist"? This class will explore these and other questions through several documentaries about artists you may not have heard of. These sessions will be anchored by discussion rather than lecture. Due to the length of the videos, class time may run two hours some days rather than 90 minutes.

9/17-10/22 12:30-2:00 PM Digital Literacy Trish Dover-Bedwell

The Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program offers hands-on learning to help you develop essential computer skills that lead to personal growth—all in a supportive, beginner-friendly environment. The six-session class covers: Basic Computer Skills, Internet Basics, Using Email, Cyber Security, Using Social Media, Accessing Telehealth Appointments.