

life@ELON

Spring 2025 – Tuesday Schedule

Morning Class: 10:00 – 12:00 and Afternoon Class: 1:30 – 3:30

February 11

Bats: Masters of the Dark

Jill Yager, Ph.D.

To put it mildly, bats have a pretty bad reputation, but did you know they can eat up to 1,200 mosquitoes an hour and are the only mammals that can fly? Join us for a fascinating look into the lives of bats, the furry night flyers. Jill Yager is a biologist, an adjunct biology professor at Warren Wilson College, and a Professor Emerita from Antioch College. Her expertise is the ecology of submerged caves, but even though she is not a bat biologist Yager has been a bat fan since her grandfather took her into her first cave and showed them to her. She will share her enthusiasm for these creatures that have a wide variety of lifestyles. You'll meet the insect-eating bats, the fruit eaters, and, of course, the blood drinkers! How are bats beneficial, and are there rewards for having bats hang around? There are lots of amazing bat facts to discover. You might never have given these animals a second thought (except for screaming when they appear in movies), but after this presentation and discussion, you might come away being a bat aficionado!

Jill Yager received her Ph.D. in Ecological Sciences from Old Dominion University following a discovery she made in the underwater caves of the Bahamas. She is a Research Associate in the Smithsonian's Department of Invertebrate Zoology, a Life member and Fellow of the National Speleological Society, and a member of Sigma Xi, The Scientific Research Society. She has spoken with audiences around the world and is currently teaching Cave Ecology and Conservation to a class of lucky students at Warren Wilson College just outside Asheville.

February 18

Classical Pianist Goes Rogue

Robert Buxton, Ph.D.

(We are not able to record this class so please plan to attend if you want to hear it.)

Robert Buxton will present a lecture/recital on arrangements of violin repertoire for solo piano by Franz Liszt, Ferruccio Busoni, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and others. The somewhat forgotten art of piano arrangement was especially prominent in the nineteenth century. Like literary translation, a musical arrangement or transcription preserves something of the original work while being elaborated on by the translator or arranger. This program is a tribute to the great violinists of the past such as Ivry Gitlis, Jascha Heifetz, Nathan Milstein, and Yehudi Menuhin.

Robert Buxton brings music from the past to life today as a performer and public speaker. He offers a unique improvised lecture-recital combination with humor, personal stories, and dazzling piano playing. As a soloist and chamber musician Buxton has performed in New York (Carnegie and Alice Tully Halls), Europe, and Japan and his interviews and recordings have been featured on major classical radio stations. He received his master's and doctorate degrees studying under Vladimir Virago at the University of North Texas.

February 25
Sports in North Carolina, and Beyond
Webb Durham III “Trip”

Trip Durham, a lifelong resident of the Old North State, shares stories and perspectives from what he affectionately calls his "sports life." Using the lenses of event operations, branding, fan engagement, and leadership, Durham's experiences will give a sense of where we have been and where we are headed in the athletics industry.

Trip Durham is a Burlington native, a graduate of Williams High School, and a graduate of East Carolina University with a BS in English. His interest in sports started when he was a sophomore in high school and the director of athletics asked him to do the public address at a JV football game. Upon graduation from college, he served as a clubhouse manager for the Burlington Indians for four years and as director of Event Operations for Winston-Salem Baseball for four years. During the next fourteen years, he worked at Elon University as Associate Director of Athletics. He has been the public address announcer for Duke football and basketball since 2009. In 2010, He founded 2D Consulting LLC which is designed to assist colleges and conferences with improving their external relations operations. He is currently the new Executive Director of the North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, housed in the Museum of History in Raleigh. Trip has served in many volunteer leadership positions in the community, most notably as chair of the Alamance County Chamber of Commerce.

March 4
The Stephen Robbins Chronicles: Three Novels by Terry Roberts
Terry Roberts

Stephen Robbins is featured in three of Terry Roberts' six novels. Robbins (like his creator) is a native of the mountains of western North Carolina and has proved himself to be skillful at solving mysteries – in a German internment camp in Hot Springs, North Carolina (“A Short Time to Stay Here”), the immigration center at Ellis Island (“My Mistress’ Eyes Are Raven Black”), and most recently in Asheville’s Grove Park Inn (“The Devil Hath a Pleasing Shape”). Roberts will share his approach to creating this protagonist for his award-winning novels.

Terry Roberts is the author of six celebrated novels: “A Short Time to Stay Here” (winner of the Willie Morris Prize for Southern Fiction and the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction); “That Bright Land” (winner of the Thomas Wolfe Literary Award, the James Still Award for Writing About the Appalachian South and the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction); and, “The Holy Ghost Speakeasy and Revival” (a finalist for the 2019 Sir Walter Raleigh Award for Fiction), My Mistress’ Eyes are Raven Black (Finalist for the 2022 Best Paperback Original Novel by the International Thriller Writers Organization), “The Sky Club” (a finalist for the 2023 Thomas Wolfe Literary Award), and recently released in October 2024, “The Devil Hath a Pleasing Shape.”

Roberts is a lifelong teacher and educational reformer as well as an award-winning novelist. He is a native of the mountains of Western North Carolina—born and bred. His ancestors include six generations of mountain farmers, as well as the bootleggers and preachers who appear in his

novels. He was raised close by his grandmother, Belva Anderson Roberts, who was born in 1888 and passed to him the magic of the past along with the grit and humor of mountain storytelling.

Roberts is the Director of the National Paideia Center and lives in Asheville, North Carolina with his wife, Lynn.

March 11

The Book of Kells: The Masterpiece of Early Irish Art

Kathleen Fisher, Ph.D.

The Book of Kells is a medieval Gospel manuscript thought by many to have been created between the seventh and ninth centuries by Christian monks living on the Scottish island of Iona. On public display at Trinity College, Dublin, this Irish cultural treasure is celebrated for its incomparable artistry. Brilliant colors, detailed ornamentation, and elaborate full-page illustrations known as “illuminations” make Kells unique among texts of its time. In this session, we’ll look closely at examples of the design and portraiture for which the manuscript is famous and explore some of the cultural and religious history that gives the Book of Kells its enduring intrigue and mystery.

Kathleen Fisher taught Religious Studies and Theology for twenty-one years at Assumption University in Massachusetts before retiring to Chapel Hill in 2023. She also taught at Boston University where she received her Ph.D. in Medieval History and Religion. Research in early Irish history and medieval monasticism led to her interest in the Book of Kells and she has presented the manuscript to a variety of audiences ever since. Fisher continues to teach remotely at the Worcester Institute for Senior Education (WISE) where, since 2019, she has offered courses in The Gnostic Gospels, Celtic Spirituality, the poet Mary Oliver, and, most recently, The Mysticism of Rumi and Francis of Assisi.

March 18

Equinox and the Mysteries of Pilot Mountain

James P. McKelvey

A photograph taken in 2012 started this author’s research on Pilot Mountain and ended with his book entitled, “Faces of Pilot Mountain: Intriguing Journey into the Deep Mysteries.” This book covers the two hundred and seventy years of published information on Pilot Mountain. The first chapter alone provides enough information about the mountain to make the reader a guide for family and friends. You will also learn the connection the sacred mountain has to George Washington, Otis Redding, Stax Volt, the Beatles, Andy Griffith, Lester Flatt, the daredevil stunt flyer Zach Reynolds and so much more. A documentary was filmed based on the book by a California crew in April of 2024 that may air on the streaming service, Prime Video.

McKelvey is now working on a second book called, “The Lessons of Pilot Mountain”, focusing on the oral history of the mountain. He’s collaborating with Occoneechee and Cherokee wisdom keepers for this project. Research for the second book reveals how important Pilot Mountain was in the ancient past as a pilgrimage ceremony site. The sun on the equinox rises right on a notch in the Big Pinnacle. There is a sun “dagger” at noon and in the evening on the same day there is an almost perfect pyramid shadow that builds toward the Sauratown Mountain and then slowly

fades. Pilot Mountain State Park acknowledges there are “highly significant” prehistoric burials on the mountain. Did you know North Carolina has a 1,500-foot-tall quartzite pyramid? Come learn more about this sacred mountain that is a little over an hour’s drive from Elon and be inspired to visit it yourself.

James P. McKelvey is a Hillsborough, North Carolina-based photographer. From 1979 to 1992 he worked and wrote for Variety in New York City, the Detroit Free Press in Detroit, Michigan, The Face in London, and U Magazine in New York City. His photographs have been published in the Raleigh News and Observer, No Depression Magazine, Rolling Stone Magazine, and on CMT television. The James McKelvey photo archive with 4,500 images is part of the Southern Folklife Collection in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

March 25

The life, musical legacy, and career of trumpeter Doc Severinsen, the bandleader of The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson Gary Hastings and Turner Battle

Doc Severinsen is one of the most iconic musicians of the twentieth century and is recognized as one of the most dedicated and talented trumpet players in the world. As the band leader of The Tonight Show Orchestra, he performed with some of the finest musicians and entertainers in America and was a household name for playing five nights a week on NBC for millions of television viewers. Doc was more than a flashy star, with his wild clothing and glitzy style. He contributed to the development of new trumpet designs and had numerous pieces written for him which he performed around the United States with symphony orchestras and symphonic bands touching the lives of the American people and beyond.

Gary Hastings is a versatile professional trumpet player and singer. He became a fan of Doc Severinsen as a young band student and has studied the many facets of Doc Severinsen’s professional life including attending several master classes presented by Severinsen. Hastings has heard him perform live over 40 times in the last 50 years at venues across the United States.

This presentation will include his own trumpet renditions of Doc Severinsen favorites, recordings, video clips, and little-known facts about this American legend accompanied by jazz pianist Turner Battle. He will explore the world of The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson and Doc’s unique relationship with the king of late-night television. He will also reveal Doc’s attempt at retiring to Mexico where he discovered a new adventure that returned him to touring and recording.

Gary Hastings is an accomplished jazz trumpeter who has performed in jazz settings across the country and around the world. For ten years he was the lead trumpet in the US Airways Jazz Orchestra and for over twenty-five years he toured with the Guy Lombardo Royal Canadians. He has also performed with the Glenn Miller Orchestra, the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra, and the Nelson Riddle Orchestra. An authority on the music of Louis Armstrong, Hastings has performed many musical tributes to Armstrong’s life and music. In addition, he is a retired assistant chief of police in Greensboro, North Carolina, and has authored a popular criminal investigation textbook plus five police detective novels.

Turner Battle is a successful composer, arranger, keyboardist, and music producer. He has been involved in projects heard on MTV and HBO and has composed and arranged original music for major companies. He has also performed with some of the great jazz musicians and singers of our time. Among other talents, Battle is an award-winning voiceover artist, and his voice has been heard on voicemail, audiobooks, video games, walking museum tours, and more. A graduate of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, he was the principal arranger for its Blue and Gold Marching Machine Band from 1980-1987.

April 1

**He knew the dangers before him: Elon graduate Dewey Hooper in World War II
Randall Bowman**

This session will tell the story of Dewey G. Hooper, a 1940 graduate of Elon College who served during the Second World War. Hooper enlisted in the U.S. Army and became a pilot in the U.S. Army Air Forces. In 1942, 2nd Lt. Hooper was killed when his B-24 Bomber crashed in a remote area of Australia during bad weather. A half-century later, an Australian named Ron Deering recovered Hooper's Elon College class ring from the wreckage. Deering contacted Elon; college employees got in contact with members of Hooper's family to tell them of the find. The ring and other items from the crash were brought home to the family and are now in the Dewey Hooper Collection in the Archives & Special Collections, Carol Grotnes Belk Library at Elon University. This session will also discuss the creation of a virtual exhibit on Hooper's story for Belk Library using Omeka, an online platform for sharing digital collections and virtual exhibits.

*Randall Bowman is an Archivist & Assistant Librarian in the Archives & Special Collections at Elon University's Belk Library. He was hired by Elon in 2000 and became a part of Archives & Special Collections in 2015. A native of North Carolina, he grew up in Durham and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a Master of Library and Information Science from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Randall works with archival collections related to Elon's church history, as well as the university's history in general. He has a personal interest in military history, particularly American military history. This interest led him to research Dewey Hooper and create an online exhibit about the pilot. Randall lives in Elon with his wife and cat Lily, and enjoys reading, researching family history, and watching college basketball. In 2016, Randall presented *Skeletons in the Closet: Genealogy for Beginners to our LIFE@Elon* classes and he is often here with Belk Library's bookmobile.*

April 8

The Ocean is Calling – Are You Listening?

Park Rublee, Ph.D. (rescheduled from October 22, 2024)

2021 – 2030 has been declared the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. The emphasis in this class will be to describe the current and future state of the oceans including plastic and nutrient pollution in the oceans, changes in fisheries and other natural resources, changing ocean circulation patterns, and consequences of climate including shifting geopolitical relationships.

Parke Rublee, an aquatic ecologist, received both his master's and doctorate degrees from North Carolina State University. After postdoctoral positions at the University of Miami and the Smithsonian Institution, he taught at Whitman College for eight years and then at UNCG for twenty-eight years. In 1997 he was elected a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He now lives in Greensboro and spends summers in Maine.

April 15

Shared Rivers: Catalyst for Cooperation or Source of Conflict?

Barbara Miller, Ph.D.

Barbara Miller will begin with an overview of international rivers and approaches to fostering cooperative development of shared rivers. This brief introduction will be followed by stories of her personal experience working in Africa on the formation of the Nile Basin Initiative (NBI), an effort by ten (later eleven) countries to pursue their shared vision to “achieve sustainable socioeconomic development through equitable utilization of, and benefit from, the common Nile Basin water resources.”

The Nile, the longest river in the world, traverses varied landscapes and cultures from its headwaters in the highlands of Ethiopia, Rwanda, and Burundi to its delta in Egypt on the Mediterranean. This is a remarkable story of how those countries came together, despite enormous challenges, in a historic decision to pursue cooperative and joint development of the Nile, and about their appeal to the World Bank to facilitate this process and to coordinate international support for their efforts. Miller will talk about the process bringing these diverse countries together; the growth and development of the NBI into a regional institution that built technical capacity and fostered more than \$10 billion of joint infrastructure development; and the many setbacks and challenges along the way – and that despite the many conflicts continuing in the region, the NBI still functions.

Barbara Miller, a Civil Engineer, worked for thirty-five years on the development and management of water, energy, and environmental systems in the US and overseas. She was with the World Bank for fifteen years, where she provided strategic and technical leadership in the development of international rivers. As Manager of the Nile Program, she supported eleven countries in the cooperative development and management of the Nile.

Previously, Miller was President of Rankin International, a small consulting firm providing expertise in water, energy, and the environment. She worked for ten years at the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), responsible for flood management and reservoir system planning in the Tennessee River Basin. She also worked in the private sector and with the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Her Civil Engineering degrees were received from the University of Illinois (Ph.D., 1984) and the University of Wisconsin (M.S., 1979). She is a licensed Professional Engineer. She retired in 2011, then spent three years in Haifa, Israel, with her husband providing voluntary service at the Baha'i World Center, followed by moving to Chattanooga, Tennessee, and to Chapel Hill in 2021.

April 22
Undergraduate Research Presentations
Various Elon Students

Join us for a riveting exploration of new scholarship from Elon's brightest young voices. Undergraduate Research is one of five learning requirements promoted by the University. Research offers a unique opportunity for students to engage in inquiry in their chosen field of study and to experience first-hand what professionals in a chosen field do. The research presentations of these students will encourage you to think about the world in ways you had not before.

At each LIFE@Elon session, three Elon students will present their research from various fields across the University. Each class will feature different student presentations, as class schedules and availability all vary. No matter which students speak to your class, the presentations will be compelling. A class member shared this about the student presentations:

“Over the last two years, I have continued to be amazed at the high levels of research and execution of these students' projects. To be honest I have had to keep reminding myself that these are undergraduates. In many cases, although the student is graduating, they have a plan to continue their research or have shared the plan for the next group of students who will continue their initial research. I have personally learned so much about a variety of topics and their dedication to finding the cure, making this a better place for all citizens, or taking in-depth looks at political and social issues. You don't want to miss these sessions.”

April 29
Greek Mythology and Video Games: Twisting the Ancient Tales
Ethan Divon

The ancient world of Greece was filled with plenty of mystical and wondrous stories of heroes and monsters. Even after thousands of years, we continue to tell those same stories, reimagining and reinventing them to best fit our needs. One such method of reinvention is that of video games, a newer and more popular media, which often lets participants experience these ancient stories as characters themselves. This session will introduce participants not only to how ancient mythology can and has been adjusted from its original context, but why these changes are so fascinating and what they can tell us about the society in which we currently live.

*Raised in suburban New York and moving to North Carolina, **Ethan Divon** is a current Classical Studies major at UNC Greensboro. With a deep passion for cross-cultural mythology and a personal interest in video games, he has fused his passions to allow the two to benefit each other. Besides his work with the Classics Gaming Collaborative, an organization that focuses on how gaming and Classical Studies can be intertwined in education, he also has a comical fascination with translating various songs into ancient Greek.*

Presenters and topics for the weekly classes are subject to change.
Classes canceled for any reason will not be made up and no refund will be given.