



Fall 2026 – Tuesday Schedule

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

September 15, 2026

North Carolina, Naturally: The Beauty and Wonder of Our State's Natural World

Eleanor Spicer Rice, PhD

North Carolina is a state of many superlatives. Barbecue, beaches, mountains and salamanders? Eleanor Spicer Rice will take us on an ant's eye view of our state's nature standouts, from highways built for insects to one of the weirdest conservation strategies on the planet.

*Back by popular demand, **Eleanor Spicer Rice** is an entomologist, award-winning author and passionate science communicator who connects people with the natural world through books, podcasts, and media appearances. She earned her PhD in entomology at North Carolina State University and has since authored ten books, including the acclaimed DEADLIEST series and Ants: Workers of the World. Eleanor is the host and writer of North Carolina, Naturally, a print, video and podcast series for Our State magazine, showcasing the state's remarkable biodiversity. Whether writing about belly button ecosystems or homing pigeons, she inspires audiences to fall in love with, and care for the natural world. She lives in Raleigh with her husband, two sons, dogs, a lizard and a valiant flock of homing pigeons.*

September 22, 2026

Doc Watson: A Life in Music

Eddie Huffman

The story of a small-town man who changed music forever. Arthel "Doc" Watson (1923–2012) is arguably one of the most influential musicians Appalachia has ever produced. A musician's musician, Doc grew up on a subsistence farm in the North Carolina mountains during the Depression, soaking up traditional music and learning to play guitar even though he was blind. Rising to fame in the 1960s as part of the burgeoning folk revival scene, Doc became the face of traditional music for many listeners, racking up multiple Grammys and releasing dozens of albums over the course of his long career. Eddie Huffman tells the story of Doc's life and legacy, drawing on extensive interviews and hundreds of hours of archival research. In making the most comprehensive biography of Watson ever, Huffman gives us an affecting and informative portrait of the man they called Doc.

Full of fascinating stories, from Doc's first banjo made from his grandmother's cat to the founding of MerleFest, this promises to be the definitive biography of the man and how he came to be synonymous with roots music in America and shows how his influence is still felt in music today.

***Eddie Huffman** is a writer, reporter, and author of John Prine: In Spite of Himself. He has contributed to Rolling Stone, The New York Times, Utne Reader, All Music Guide, Goldmine, The Virgin Islands Source, and many other publications. Eddie is an avid rail-trail rider, disc golfer, semi-professional photographer and videographer, an occasional movie extra, and a father and grandfather. He ate lunch with James Brown on Valentine's Day and interviewed Marty Stuart while riding down I-85 in Ernest*

Tubb's old tour bus. Eddie is an Alamance County native and ninth- or tenth-generation North Carolinian who now lives in Greensboro. Both of his parents attended Elon, while Eddie earned a degree in English and history from UNC-Chapel Hill.

September 29, 2026

Dementia 101

Loy Campbell, MS, OTR/L

What is dementia, how do we respond in helpful ways to people living with dementia, and how do we reduce our risk of dementia? There is much fear of diseases that cause dementia. By diving into the topic to understand brain science and how we can change our approach, we are empowered to reduce the fear and stigma around these diseases. The session will include ample time for questions and answers.

Loy Campbell is an occupational therapist with a special interest in dementia care. She works mostly in the hospital setting, as well as dementia care training for caregivers, first responders, faith communities, and the general community. Outside of her day job, Loy is the co-convener of the Alamance County Community Remembrance Coalition, sending many emails and getting folks organized. In her free time, Loy enjoys traveling to National Parks, cheering on the Virginia Tech Hokies, playing tennis, and reading as much as possible.

October 6, 2026

The Bauhaus and Black Mountain College

Carl R. Shatley, MA

Imagine a place to learn and express oneself in Germany and later in North Carolina that were worlds apart but would share a common philosophy regarding individual artistic expression. The Bauhaus (building house) was a German art school operational from 1919 to 1933 that combined crafts and fine arts. The school became famous for its approach to design, which attempted to unify individual artistic vision with the principles of mass production and emphasis on function.

Black Mountain College was a private liberal arts college in Black Mountain, North Carolina, founded in 1933 that emphasized holistic learning and the study of art as central to a liberal arts education. Many of the college's faculty and students would go on to become highly influential in the arts as part of the American avant-garde. We will explore the history and commonality of both institutions and their relevance in today's society as well as the contributions that are part of our daily lives.

Carl R. Shatley is a presenter/lecturer at the Hickory Museum of Art and Every Age Communities on art related and historical topics. He holds a Master of Arts degree from Duke University in History, Bachelor of Arts degree in Art from Greensboro College and studied at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. He was Teacher of the Year at Davidson County Community College and has taught Art Appreciation, Design, Drawing, Painting, Digital Photography and Graphic Design. Carl retired as Principal/Owner of his Design and Marketing firm after serving clients for over 30 years. This fall, he will also be presenting at the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum.

October 13, 2026

John C. Campbell Folk School Experience

Bethany Chaney

Discover the John C. Campbell Folk School experience through an overview of its nearly 100-year history and its role as a cornerstone educational institution in Appalachia. Founded in 1925 on the Danish noncompetitive folk school model, the Folk School welcomes nearly 6,000 students each year for more than 800 classes, along with hundreds of music, dance, and community events that attract visitors from around the world. Attendees will discover the Folk School's unique approach to lifelong learning on its 270-acre campus in Brasstown, North Carolina, where adults come together year-round to explore traditional and contemporary crafts, art, music, dance, cooking, nature studies, and more.

***Bethany Chaney** is Executive Director of the John C. Campbell Folk School. Before joining the Folk School, she spent more than 25 years in nonprofit and public service leadership, specializing in resource development, strategic planning, and community and economic development. She served as alderman for the Town of Carrboro from 2014 to 2019 and is an award-winning writer, a former North Carolina Arts Council Fellow, and an avid maker of pine needle baskets, a craft she first learned as a Folk School student. In 2025, Country Living magazine named Bethany one of its Top 100 Design Influencers for her work as an arts advocate. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill and an MBA from Northeastern University.*

October 20, 2026

Using Language to Understand Native Americans Near and Far: Meetings, Poles, and Nail-biting Times

Corey Roberts, PhD

What do we know about Native Americans, both past and present, in the Elon region and throughout the United States? Through history, culture, and language, this presentation offers a deeper understanding of the Occaneechi Band of the Saponi Nation, the Indigenous people who have been stewards of the land on which Elon sits for hundreds of years.

The discussion then broadens to explore Indigenous peoples across the United States and Turtle Island (North America). Along the way, participants will discover the importance of language, not only the words used to recount stories and histories, but also specific examples from Native American and other languages. Using vocabulary and concepts from three Indigenous languages of the Piedmont region, participants will gain insight into the power of the words we say.

***Corey Roberts** is an Occaneechi and an Assistant Professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies at Elon University. He earned his doctorate in Linguistics from the University of Arizona, where he focused on the revitalization of the Yesa:sahj language. He also holds degrees in Native American Languages and Linguistics, Comparative Languages, and Performing Arts. Since 2020, he has taught the Yesa:sahj language, as well as Spanish, French, and English as a Second Language in the United States and South America.*

October 27, 2026

Stories as Pathways to Caring and Transformation

Lynden Harris

We will begin with a slideshow introducing Hidden Voices' mission, vision, and the work of its first twenty-four years. This visual feast features images from individual projects that illustrate the organization's larger vision and collaborative work with underrepresented communities. From there, we will take a deeper dive into *Serving Life: ReVisioning Justice*. This project offers an opportunity to explore how an idea evolves from its inception, expands through community connections, and grows into a multifaceted initiative over time. Participants will also experience firsthand some of the stories from *Right Here, Right Now: Life Stories from America's Death Row* through a class reading of one of its Story Cycles. We will close with the same kind of facilitated conversation offered at the end of every reading, providing time for reflection, dialogue, and restoration.

Lynden Harris is the founder and artistic director of Hidden Voices, a nonprofit organization now in its 25th year of collaborating with underrepresented communities to create award-winning projects that combine storytelling, performance, mapping, music, digital media, and interactive exhibits.

Previously the artistic director of ArtsCenter Stage, Harris was a founding Cultural Agent for the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, a 2024 and 2018 MAP Fund recipient, a 2021 A Blade of Grass Fellow, and the 2020 North Carolina Playwriting Fellow. Her play COUNT premiered at PlayMakers Repertory Company in 2018 and was most recently staged at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, New Jersey. In 2021, Right Here, Right Now: Life Stories from America's Death Row was published by Duke University Press. Her latest Hidden Voices project is Sanctuary: Exploring the Borders of Belonging.

November 3, 2026

Who Killed President John F. Kennedy?

Peter Murray, PhD

The assassination of President John Kennedy is major event in United States history, especially for those of us who still remember where we were when we first heard that the President had been shot in Dallas. There had been no presidential assassination since William McKinley in 1901. The public was still reeling from the shock of the President's death when Lee Harvey Oswald was gunned down while in police custody. (It was television's first live broadcast of a murder.) President Lyndon Johnson appointed a blue-ribbon commission to investigate and report to the nation about the assassination, but problems began almost immediately. Both the CIA and the FBI withheld vital information from the Warren Commission because they feared revealing they had been engaged in dubious or outright illegal activities.

Since the release of the Warren Commission report, conspiracy theorists have spun numerous tales about who in and out of the government might have been involved in Kennedy's assassination. Yet other researchers have returned to the conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald shot John Kennedy and that he acted alone.

This talk will be a history of the controversies associated with the Kennedy assassination, look at other assassins in American history, and examine why this question has endured.

Dr. Peter Murray received his PhD in United States history from Indiana University-Bloomington, in 1985. After teaching for three years at Indiana State University, he taught for thirty-two years at Methodist University in Fayetteville, North Carolina. Since fall 2020, Murray and his wife Mary Cathryn have lived at Twin Lakes. In 2021, he presented for LIFE@Elon "The Case for Reparations" and has lectured at Twin Lakes each February on African American history. In 2004, the University of Missouri Press published Methodists and the Crucible of Race, his study of the United Methodist Church and its response to the Civil Rights Movement.

November 10, 2026

Framing War: A Photojournalist's Journey from Community News to Desert Storm

Randy Piland

How does a civilian photojournalist become a military storyteller? This presentation follows Randy Piland's journey from covering everyday life for local newspapers to documenting one of the defining conflicts of the twentieth century as an Army Reserve/National Guard photojournalist. Through personal stories and compelling images, he explores how years of preparation, journalistic principles, and military service shaped his approach to documenting Operation Desert Storm. The presentation offers a unique perspective on the responsibility of visual storytelling, preserving history through photographs that inform, endure, and connect audiences to moments they could never witness firsthand.

Randy Piland spent thirty years as a professional photojournalist at four newspapers in Georgia, Massachusetts, and Tennessee, including thirteen years as Picture Editor and Senior Photographer at The Tennessean in Nashville, where he helped lead the newspaper's transition from film to digital photography.

At the same time, he served in the U.S. Army Reserve and Army National Guard as a public affairs photojournalist from 1984 to 1992. His military assignments culminated in covering Operation Desert Storm with VII Corps during the first Gulf War, along with deployments and missions in Panama, Honduras, Germany, Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and St. Vincent. His work earned the prestigious Keith L. Ware Award and numerous Department of the Army and Department of Defense journalism honors.

Piland has an undergraduate degree in Digital Media Communications from Middle Tennessee State University '03 and a master's degree in visual communications/multimedia from Ohio University '05.

Since joining Elon University in 2005, Piland has continued to teach visual storytelling and publication design while helping launch new initiatives, including the annual Elon Drone Day, which he founded in November 2021.

November 17, 2026

Edgar Allan Poe

Charles Wissinger

Born to actors in Boston, Edgar Allan Poe came to Richmond, Virginia, with his talented mother. After her death, he was taken in by the Allan family. Poe showed remarkable talent for poetry and prose from an early age and went on to become America's first great native-born author. Explore his eccentric and often-tortured life while enjoying readings from some of his best-known works.

Charles Wissinger is pleased to return to LIFE@Elon. He has appeared on HBO, PBS, the History Channel, National Geographic, and in films, museums, and theaters across the country. He continues to work with the Historic St. John's Church Foundation, portraying Patrick Henry in his famous "Liberty or Death" speech, as well as presenting first-person interpretations of Francis Scott Key, Marquis de Lafayette, Edgar Allan Poe, and other historical figures. His favorite stage roles include J. Pierpont Finch in How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying, Frank Butler in Annie Get Your Gun, Bob Wallace in White Christmas, and The Old Man in A Christmas Story: The Musical.

*** November 25 - No class for the Thanksgiving break.**

December 1, 2026

Music in the American Colonies in 1776

Mara Shea

Colonial America in 1776 stood at the beginning of a new chapter. Struggling to separate from Great Britain's rule, the new states still had their roots solidly in one of the primary homelands for immigrants, and their music and dance reflected that heritage. We will explore some of the musical history of the colonies as they evolved into the American states: fiddle tunes for community and barn dances, military marches (often played on fifes), nautical shanty songs, and hymns all were part of the American soundscape in 1776.

Mara Shea has been a dance fiddler for about thirty-five years – for Scottish, contra, and English country dance. She is also a teacher; her fiddle students range from 7 to 87, with most being between 50-75. She studied classical violin for the first part of her life until she was twenty, when she abandoned the violin entirely, picking it up again fifteen years later to become a dance fiddle player. She studied ethnomusicology and folklore in Scotland for a year at the University of Aberdeen, and she loves to write and do research about tune histories. She has lived in North Carolina for forty years, and now lives at Twin Lakes in Elon, North Carolina. She travels throughout the United States and the United Kingdom playing for dance events and teaching workshops. Should you want to know more, you can go to Mara's website – marashea.com

December 8, 2026

Secret Maps of the Cold War

Russell Guy, MS

When Russell Guy was in the map business in Burlington, North Carolina, he traveled extensively in Europe, including behind the Iron Curtain to purchase maps. During the Cold War era, the Soviet Union created maps of the entire world. Some areas had never been mapped before. Detailed maps of over 300 cities in the United States were created by highly skilled Russian cartographers. Over 100,000 Soviet agents (spies) worked around the world to create the maps. In many cases the maps include detail on roads, forests, bridges, and utility infrastructure that are not found on domestically produced maps from the United States Geological Survey.

During and following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russian military members were looking at ways to earn money. In some cases, Russian troops had not received pay for months. Through an Estonian

contact, Russell was put in touch with the commander of a former Soviet military base. Russell was able to purchase secret maps produced by the Soviet Union from the Russian general and smuggle them back to the United States for sale to the CIA.

***Russell Guy** grew up on the outskirts of San Francisco. He graduated with a BA in Geology from UC Santa Barbara and an MS in Geology from Virginia Tech. After three years as Curator at Virginia Tech's Geology Museum, he came to Burlington in 1982 to work for Dr. Beth Powell when she started Omni Resources, a geological consulting company. After several years, Omni switched to the map business, and he continued to work there for thirty-seven years, taking over from Beth in 2011, then retiring in 2019.*

He enjoys traveling, having visited all fifty states and over seventy-five countries. He has been an active Rotarian for twenty years and oversees the global scholarship program for our region. He is a member of our Wednesday afternoon LIFE@Elon class.

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

Spring 2027 Dates

February 16, 23
March 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
April 6, 13, 20, 27
May 4