Jan. 13

**Unity and Disunity: The Legacy of the Chinese Communist Party in Modern China**

**Gideon May**, China Scholar and OLLI study group leader

**Talk Description**: The vast history of China is checkered by periods of war and peace, strife and stability, unity and disunity. Using an historical lens, we will explore these phenomena from the first unification of China in 221BC to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). We will examine the CCP in modern China from both domestic and international perspectives and will identify the key drivers of China's foreign policy strategy and their impact on China's behavior on the world stage.

**Biography**: Gideon May holds a B.A. (summa cum laud) from Tufts University in Chinese and Education. He has also studied at Beijing Normal University and Yunnan University, China and has led two enthusiastically received OLLI study groups on modern China in 2020.

Jan. 19 (Moved from 1/20 to avoid Presidential Inauguration)

**What a Story: How the Tales We Inherit Shape Our Worlds**

**Jaed Coffin**, Professor of Creative Writing at University of New Hampshire

**Talk Description**: Jaed will discuss how the stories we tell--about ourselves, where we come from, and who we are--frame the way that we see the world. Primarily, I'm interested in how the stories we grow up (and inherit from our parents/families/communities) with shape the way we see the world--for better, worse and otherwise.

**Biography**: Jaed Coffin is the author of *Roughhouse Friday*, a memoir about the year he won the middleweight title of a barroom boxing show in Alaska. He's also the author of *A Chant to Soothe Wild Elephants*, which chronicles the summer he spent as a Buddhist monk in his mother's village in Thailand. A regular contributor to Down East magazine, Jaed's writing has appeared in the New York Times, Nautilus, and The Sun, and his live performances have been featured on the Moth Radio Hour and TED.com. He teaches creative writing at the University of New Hampshire and lives in Maine with his wife and daughters. For more information: [https://www.jaedcoffin.com/](https://www.jaedcoffin.com/)
Jan. 27

*Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC and the Birth of the Blacklist.*

**Tom Doherty,** Professor of American Studies, Brandeis University

**Talk Description:** Over nine days in October 1947, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, chaired by a dapper martinet named J. Parnell Thomas (R-NJ), held a soon-to-be notorious round of hearings into alleged Communist subversion in Hollywood. Professor Doherty’s talk will tell the story of the first full-on media-political spectacle of the postwar era--the event that ignited the anti-Communist strain in Cold War culture and bridged the reams of entertainment and politics--part show, part trial.


Feb. 3

*Black Holes at the Center of Galaxies*

**Alan Marscher,** Professor of Astronomy, Boston University

**Talk Description:** Ironically, black holes create the most luminous objects in the universe. The speaker will discuss how gas falling onto black holes and jets of high-energy particles powered by the black hole's spin cause the centers of galaxies to shine brightly across the entire spectrum from radio to visible to X-ray and gamma-ray wavelengths.

**Biography:** Dr. Alan Marscher is a professor of astronomy in the Astronomy Department and Institute for Astrophysical Research at Boston University. He has published over 400 articles in scientific journals and books, mostly on the topic of quasars and other types of active galactic nuclei. His research group uses data from a number of NASA satellite observatories and ground-based telescopes to follow variations in brightness and changes in images of jets of high-energy particles and magnetic fields at the centers of some galaxies. He is a member of the Event Horizon Telescope collaboration, which has won the 2019 Diamond Achievement Award from the National Science Foundation and the 2020 Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics for the first image of the region surrounding a black hole, in the galaxy M87.
Lost and Found In Spain, Tales of An Ambassador’s Wife

Susan Solomont, Author and Senior Director, TPI (The Philanthropic Institute)

Talk Description: Over the three and a half years in Spain, Susan Solomont finds her place in the Madrid Jewish community and learns the role of religion in Spain. When her husband was appointed by President Barack Obama to be U.S. Ambassador to Spain and Andorra, Susan Solomont uprooted herself. Susan discovers the days known as La Convivencia (The Coexistence), when Jews, Muslims and Christian coexisted in harmony, and explores the dark history of the Inquisition to the modern-day pluralistic country that is Spain. Along the way, she learns the rules of a diplomatic household, feeds her culinary curiosity with the help of some of Spain’s greatest chefs, and discovers her own voice as she creates new meaning in her role as a spouse, a community member, and a twenty-first century woman. Her book, Lost and Found in Spain, is an insider’s account of everyday life in an American embassy that reminds us we are all looking for our place in the world, whether on the international stage or in our own hearts.

Biography: Susan Lewis Solomont has enjoyed a dynamic and impressive career in the field of philanthropy and she is a Tufts alum, G ’81 (Eliot Pearson). For over 20 years Susan has been a Senior Philanthropic Advisor at The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI) in Boston, Massachusetts, a not-for-profit consulting firm that advises individuals, foundations and corporations on how to design philanthropy programs to create meaning and impact. From 2010-2013, Susan lived in Madrid Spain where her husband Alan Solomont served as the United States Ambassador to Spain and Andorra. While in Spain, Susan was actively involved in programs and projects that helped women business leaders connect. She chaired the American Chamber of Commerce Women’s Leadership Committee and at US Embassy Madrid, she created the Women’s Leadership Network, a series of events designed to promote the role of women’s in business and civic life. Ms. Solomont also chaired the US Embassy’s Volunteers in Action program, which engaged Embassy employees and family members in volunteer activities throughout Spain. Ms. Solomont has been a speaker on a range of topics including women and entrepreneurship, the role of Ambassador’s spouse, philanthropy and corporate social responsibility. Earlier in her career, Ms. Solomont worked for WGBH, the nation’s premier public broadcasting station. Ms. Solomont is committed to being an active and engaged citizen in the community in which she lives. She is currently on the board of the Berklee College of Music and has been a board member of many leading institutions in the Boston area. She has received several awards recognizing her community leadership, including the FEDEPE International Woman of the Year Award, Madrid, Spain, ADL Woman of Valor Award, Boston, Massachusetts and the YWCA Outstanding Women’s Leadership Award, Boston, Massachusetts.
Feb. 17

What to Do About Partisan Polarization

Peter Levine, Professor of Civic Studies, Tufts University

Talk Description: About a quarter of Democrats and Republicans choose to rate the other party at zero on a 0-100 scale. That and other measures of strong antipathy for the opposite party have risen rapidly since 2000. This type of polarization threatens our constitutional system, which was not designed with parties in mind, let alone polarized and inimical parties. After examining some evidence and explanations of this problem, we’ll consider some possible solutions.

Biography: Peter Levine is the Academic Dean and the Lincoln Filene Professor of Citizenship & Public Affairs in Tufts University’s Jonathan Tisch College of Civic Life. He also has appointments in Tufts’ Political Science and Philosophy departments and directs the Civic Studies major. He is the author of *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: The Promise of Civic Renewal in America* (2013) and six other books. He works regularly with nonpartisan civic groups in the US and overseas.

Feb. 24

A Historical Perspective on the Supreme Court and Its Justices

Elise Tamplin, OLLI Member

Talk Description: The U.S. Supreme Court opened for business on February 1, 1790. The court back then bore little resemblance to the current one, and it certainly had some interesting characters. Of the original six justices appointed by George Washington, one became the most hated man in the country for a time, one didn’t want to serve despite being approved by the Senate, and a third literally jumped into Charleston Bay when he lost his seat on the bench. Those were not the last interesting characters to serve on the court over the past two centuries.

Biography: Elise Tamplin is an OLLI member who, although her career was in healthcare, has had a lifelong love of history. She has been an active member of the OLLI History Club for several years.
Mar. 3

Archaeology in the Land of the Bible

Nate Ramsayer, Archaeologist and Biblical Scholar

Talk Description: For almost 200 years archaeologists have been digging in the modern Middle East, producing awe-inspiring discoveries and an immense amount of scholarly literature on biblical events and characters. But how does the archaeological record compare with what the Bible says about our history? This information will be synthesized in a vivid, easy-to-follow Zoom presentation by biblical scholar and archaeologist Nate Ramsayer, who has spent the past eight years excavating at sites in Israel, Russia, and the U.K. Nate will help Osher members to understand how material culture informs our modern perspective of ancient events. So grab your Indiana Jones style fedora and whip, and come learn about fascinating discoveries from the ancient world!

Biography: Nate Ramsayer is a freelance biblical studies instructor, giving guest lectures at churches, synagogues, senior communities, schools, and universities around the country. He holds an M.A. degree in Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East from Brandeis University. He is also an active archaeologist who has excavated at seven sites around the world, focusing mainly in Israel during the Bronze and Iron Ages. Nate’s scholarly research interests include biblical composition and manuscript history, ancient Near Eastern myths, and exploring points at which the archaeological record confirms/is at tension with the narrative found in the Bible. He has also worked extensively in the field of the Dead Sea Scrolls, presenting papers, giving lectures, working with museum exhibits, and even researching at Qumran caves where the scrolls were found. Additionally, Nate is an accomplished professional singer in Boston, performing regularly with the BSO and Boston Pops, as well as being active in musical theater. Other Nate fun facts: he is a former karaoke host, samurai sword tournament champion, and one of America’s top-scoring Ms. Pac-Man players.

Mar. 10

The Great Homo Sapiens Debate

Jonathan Fanning, Educator

Talk Description: What is it that makes us human? In the late 19th century, anthropologists began to uncover evidence of Homo sapiens evolutionary origin. Since that time, our understanding of how and when we emerged as a species has shifted dramatically based on available evidence. There are currently over a dozen potential species that could have existed within the Homo genus. Where does Homo sapiens fit within this picture, and why are we the only species still in existence? Explore some recent anthropological discoveries and how they shape our understanding of human evolution.
**Biography:** Jonathan has a bachelor’s degree in Biogeography from Hampshire College, and a Master’s degree in Cultural Anthropology from Colorado State University. His graduate work focused on how individuals develop a sense of personal and cultural identity, focusing particularly on the role environmental resources and narratives play to connect people with the past. Currently, he works in the Community Initiatives department at the Museum of Science, Boston, attempting to increase the Museum’s relevance and impact on minoritized and underrepresented communities. In his spare time, he enjoys coaching speech and debate for high school students, ballroom dancing, and cooking.

Mar. 17

**Activism Begins at Home: Putting the Cambridge Suffrage Movement in Conversation with the History of Women’s Suffrage**

Susan Ware, Honorary Women's Suffrage Centennial Historian, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe

**Talk description:** The struggle for women’s suffrage lasted almost a century and engaged the energies of three generations of women. Traditional histories have focused on the stories of a few iconic leaders and the national organizations they founded but there is a broad, more diverse suffrage history waiting to be told. This new history shifts the frame of reference away from the national leadership to highlight the women (and occasionally the men) who made women's suffrage happen in states and communities across the nation. The Cambridge Political Equality Association provides a window on local activism and its relation to the larger movement.

**Biography:** A pioneer in the field of women’s history and a leading feminist biographer, Susan Ware is the author and editor of numerous books on twentieth-century U.S. history. Educated at Wellesley College and Harvard University, she has taught at New York University and Harvard, where she served as editor of the biographical dictionary Notable American Women: Completing the Twentieth Century (2004). Since 2012, she has served as the general editor of the American National Biography, published by Oxford University Press under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies. Ware has long been associated with the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study where she serves as the Honorary Women’s Suffrage Centennial Historian. The Library of America will publish a women’s suffrage anthology edited by Ware in 2020. Book: *Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press)
Mar. 24

A Look into the Elephant Psyche

Danielle Carnahan, Wildlife Conservationist

Talk description: The animal psyche is something that is not fully understood yet; however, with ongoing research, conservationists have been able to make strides towards recognizing just how similar many species are to humans. Elephants are one of the most intelligent and sentient species on our planet, and with this comes the ability to form trauma around memories and experiences. In 2019 Danielle traveled to Thailand to observe a group of captive elephants to identify the prevalence of complex post traumatic stress disorder and how captive management can either alleviate or exacerbate the trauma they’ve experienced. Learn more about the trauma elephants experience and how you, as a consumer, can create a better world for Asian elephants.

Biography: Danielle Carnahan is a wildlife conservationist with a master’s degree from the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine in Conservation Medicine and is the author of the conservation blog, The Call to Conserve. Danielle researched the impact tourism has on the psychological health of captive Asian elephants while traveling throughout Thailand and continues to work towards creating a safer world for wildlife. In addition to getting involved in global elephant conservation efforts, Danielle started her blog, The Call to Conserve, to create a place for readers all over the world to learn about how they can contribute to conservation and take action in their everyday lives in order to make a greater impact on the planet. For more information about Danielle’s research and ways to support global conservation, follow her blog www.thecalltoconserve.com.

Mar. 31

LEGO in Kindergarten: Engineering Education for All

Chris Rogers, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Tufts

Talk Description: Chris and others have been working with LEGO for almost 25 years in the development of robots for schools. He will talk about what they are trying to accomplish and show cool things kids have made along the way.

Biography: Chris is a professor in Mechanical Engineering and has been working at Tufts for over 30 years. His research has included engineering education (LEGO, NI, PTC, NSF), musical instrument manufacturing (with Steinway, Selmer, Bach, and others), Chemical-Mechanical Planarization (Intel), Aircraft Noise (McDonnell Douglas), Particle-laden turbulence (NSF), and a few other cool things. His greatest accomplishment (after successfully marrying off 3 kids) is to have flown over 700 parabolas on NASA’s vomit comet without getting sick.