



Renaissance Academy at Chicago NFP

Winter 2025

January 21 – February 27, 2025

Located at

Saint Xavier University

3700 West 103rd Street

We are back on the SXU campus for Fall!

We will also offer a class and book clubs

online via Zoom.

What is the Renaissance Academy?

The Renaissance Academy is an association of retired and semi-retired men and women who get together to experience intellectual growth in an environment that is open to all who believe in pursuing the Academy's lifelong learning opportunities.

Members are encouraged to volunteer their energy and skills to make the program successful. Please consider how you might contribute your time and talent to our organization.

Renaissance Academy Information

Email: renaissancechgo@gmail.com

Phone: 773-298-3149. **This is an answering machine only. Please leave a message.**

The Newsletter can be accessed on the Renaissance Academy website:

<https://www.renaissancechgo.org>.

Winter 2025 Registration

If you enrolled in fall, you are a CURRENT MEMBER and just need to register for classes. Registration runs from December 13 – December 27 on line at

<https://www.renaissancechgo.org>

Go to the Course Registration page and fill out the Course Registration Form

If you are not currently a member and wish to join Renaissance Academy, please go to <https://www.renaissancechgo.org>, select “Membership” and fill out the enrollment form. The membership enrollment fee for the entire year is \$180 and instructions for payment are on the site.

Every member must have access to email. No information or materials will be mailed.

The fee includes: classes for all three terms, Christmas and Spring luncheons, use of the Shannon Center track on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Renaissance Forum (formerly Farrell Forum), and the opportunity to audit an SXU class with consent of professor.

While participating in our various programs, you may be included in photos and/or videos. These photographs and videos are used in a variety of publications and advertising materials. By registering for our programs, participants consent to the use of these photos and videos.

Requests for assistance can be emailed to
renaissancechgo@gmail.com.

The final date for registering is December 27, 2025.



It seems like Fall just flew by! Time goes so much faster when we retire! And we Renaissance members seem to be very busy people who like to avail ourselves of opportunities to see, hear, and talk about new things and to meet new people!

Now, after a beautiful autumn, we are heading into winter! Once again, Renaissance has an assortment of interesting classes from which to choose! We will have two Zoom classes on Wednesdays, so those of you who travel or would like to stay inside to avoid the weather will be able to participate.

Carol Conway will guide us through reading *Jane Eyre*, a novel I read when I was a young girl. I love her classes and spending time with the people who come together to talk about their interesting perspectives.

Kathy Konopasek will present "Politically Themed Films," certainly a timely topic!

Betty Kort will host a Zoom book club on Generations: The Real Differences Between Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, Boomers, and Silents--and What They Mean for America's Future, by Jean M. Twenge. This certainly sounds intriguing!

We will hold our regular Tuesday and Thursday classes on such topics as "News and Views," "Law for the Layman," "George Orwell," "Human Behavior," "Great Tours of Ireland." There will be two music programs this Winter. Betty Kort will share stories behind some of the great songs that we grew up with, from country music to Motown and the Beatles in "Anatomy of a Song." Always a fun class! Pat Schultz will continue an exploration of Folk Music, a program which was introduced in the Fall.

Be sure to save the date of March 11 for our annual Memorial Mass in the McDonough Chapel at 10 a.m. followed by the Renaissance Forum on "Women in History" at 11:30 in the Butler Room.

Jean Day, President

**Winter 2025 Session
Jan. 21 – Feb. 27
On Campus**

Tuesday 2:30-3:30

- 1. Anatomy of a Song
Betty Kort**
- 2. News and Views
Mike Yeager and team**

Tuesday 3:45- 4:45

- 3. George Orwell
Mike Young / Mike Yeager**
- 4. The Mysteries of Human Behavior
Maureen Connolly**

**Winter 2025 Session
Jan.21– Feb. 27
Zoom**

Wednesday

12:00 -1:00

5. **The Novels You Weren't Ready for in High School**
Jane Eyre
Carol Conway

1:15 – 2:15

6. **Politics as Unusual - Its Portrayal in American Film**
Kathy Konopasek

**Winter 2025 Session
Jan.21 – Feb. 27
On Campus**

Thursday 2:30 – 3:30

7. **Law for the Layman**

Jay Gyarmathy

8. **The Irish Identity, Independence, History and Literature**

Sharon Coghlan Gerc

Thursday 3:45 – 4:45

9. **Folk Music: Part 2**

Pat Schultz

**Tuesday 2:30 - 3:30
On Campus**

1. Anatomy of a Song

Betty Kort



From Marc Myers' book, entitled *Anatomy of a Song*, which includes 100 songs; this class has uncovered the stories behind 39. The fall term ended with Rod Stewart and Joni Mitchell. The Winter Term will

expand the topics to include a look at different genres of music. As with the previous three Anatomy of a Song sessions, our facilitator will take you down an occasional rabbit hole. "I can hear music, sweet, sweet music." Stories abound when it comes to One Hit Wonders, Motown and Country Music.



There will be a tribute to artists who died well before their time. Who will ever forget the first time Ed Sullivan introduced the Beatles? There are bands and artists that started in the 60's and are still drawing huge crowds with a mixture of boomers and gen Z's coming out to see them perform. Young people are discovering the music of an older generation. Come to this class and enjoy the songs of our youth.



2. News and Views

Jim Condon, John Garstka, Mary Hendry, Nancy North, Mike Yeager, Mike Young

Our day is filled with events that alter, illuminate, and often surprise us and you are there front and center! Join us as we attempt to make sense of the news of the day. Your perspective, of course, is always welcome.



**Tuesday 3:45 - 4:45
SXU on campus**

3. George Orwell

Mike Yeager, Mike Young

The purpose of this course is to understand how George Orwell rose from provincial obscurity to become the most influential British author of the last 100 years. With uncanny foresight Orwell warned against so many of the ills plaguing modern life especially the rise of the surveillance state, the tyranny of group think, the clever lies of propaganda, and the pursuit of power for its own sake.



People who take this course may want to read the books, *Animal Farm*, and *1984* at some point as *Animal Farm* will be part of the winter term and the later in the Spring.

4. The Mysteries of Human Behavior

Maureen Connolly

The DVD program chosen for the winter session is a continuation of the presentation from the *Great Courses Program UNDERSTANDING THE MYSTERIES OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR*. We will continue to listen to and examine some of the particularly puzzling aspects of human nature--- features of people's thoughts, emotions and behaviors that have intrigued scientists and laypeople alike. Relying on the latest theories and research from psychology, neuroscience, and other behavioral sciences, each lecture in this course addresses a provocative question about human behavior. The six lectures we will discuss during the winter session are:

- *Can Subliminal Messages Affect Behavior?*
- *Why Do We Dream?*
- *Why Are People So Full of Themselves?*
- *Do People Have Psychic Abilities?*
- *Why Don't Adolescents Behave Like Adults?*
- *How Much Do Men and Women Really Differ?*

Professor Mark Leary, a Family Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience at Duke University, will present this series of lectures. Professor Leary is the author of a dozen books on social motivation, emotion and ego. He is among the world's top social and personality psychologists.

Prior attendance from previous terms is not required because each Video is complete on its own.

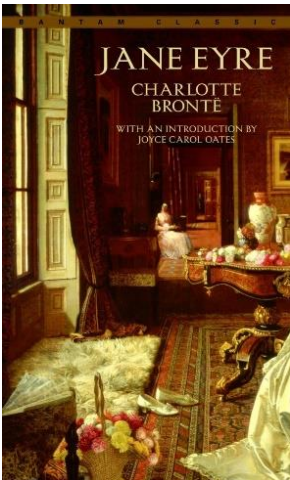


Wednesday Zoom

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM Zoom

5. The Novels You Weren't Ready for in High School: Jane Eyre

Carol Conway



I will use the Bantam Classic Edition with an introduction by Joyce Carol Oates. It's a reasonable price. Here is the schedule of readings:

Week one: Chapters 1-9

Week two: Chapters 10-15

Week three: Chapters 16-20

Week four: Chapters 21-26

Week five: Chapters 27-31

Week six: Chapters 32-end

Feel free to email me with any questions at cairec49@yahoo.com.

1:15 PM – 2:15 PM Zoom

6. Politics as Unusual - Its Portrayal in American Film

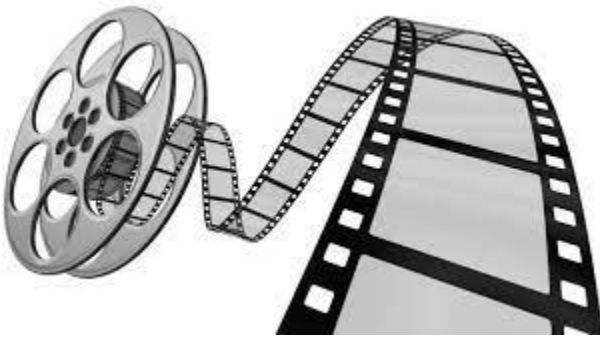
Kathy Konopasek

In 2025, as the 119th Congress is seated and the 47th President is installed, let us look at some 20th Century films that had an impact on how politics and the news have been portrayed in the USA. (One film is made in the 21st Century.) Films selected touch upon history and ideals in government; challenging our thinking as citizens, and possibly even predicting the future.

There are eight films listed here, as I found them relating to the exploration of the theme. With your indulgence, we may discuss two films at two of our six sessions.



- *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* - 1939
- *The Candidate* - 1972
- *Network* - 1976
- *Being There* - 1979
- *The American President* - 1995
- *Wag the Dog* - 1997
- *Primary Colors* - 1998
- *Ides of March* - 2011



**Thursday 2:30 – 3:30
SXU on campus**

7. Law for the Layman

Jay Gyarmathy

This course will cover a variety of topics such as the origins of the law and substantive topics like probate, wills, contracts, domestic and criminal law.

Procedural law will be addressed by looking at the factors a lawyer analyzes before representing a client and exploring the anatomy of a lawsuit.

Warning! The course is not a substitute for getting legal counsel for a specific legal issue but will clarify legal jargon and how a legal matter is resolved.



8. The Irish Identity, Independence, History and Literature

Sharon Coghlan Gerc



We will start a NEW *Great Courses* class with Dr. Marc Conner, the narrator of our previous series, during the previous terms. During the next year we will continue learning about Ireland and will focus on Irish Identity. In this course, we will examine the full arc of Irish history, from its origins in the pre-

Celtic period to the achievement of independence in the 20th century.

We will focus on the misty legend and mythologies of the first settlers in Ireland and on the rich Celtic culture of the Iron Age. We will study the coming of Saint Patrick and the monastic period, followed by the invasions of the Vikings and the Normans. Then we will examine the long struggle between Catholic and Protestant England and the centuries of conflict that to some extent persists today. At the same time, the story of Ireland's cultural independence runs parallel to the story of its political independence.

We will learn about the grand mythologies and supernatural legends of the Celtic peoples, whose stories served as an inspiration for the source of material for the period of the Irish Renaissance. We will also delve into the art and poetry of the monastic writers and learn of the rich cultural exchanges among the native Irish, the Vikings, and the waves of English invaders. Each 30-minute tour includes beautiful scenery and historical information about the Irish identity and the impact on its independence, role in history, literature and art. Those who have traveled to Ireland are encouraged to share their experiences as we watch and learn about Ireland together.

Prior attendance from previous terms is not required because each video is complete on its own.

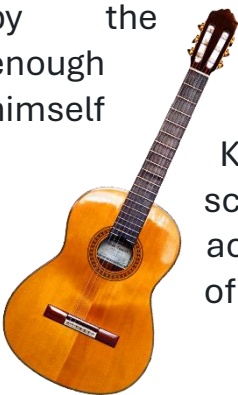


**Thursday 3:45 - 4:45
SXU on campus**

9. Folk Music: Part 2

Pat Schultz

Last term, Erin and Brian McCann sparked our interest with their intriguing series on folk music. This term, we are taking it a step further and delving deeper into this captivating genre. Through the miracle of recorded YouTube interviews, Mark Guarino, author of *Country & Midwestern: Chicago in the History of Country Music and the Folk Revival*, will share his insights and expertise from his book, published in 2023 by the University of Chicago Press. If there is enough interest, we might even listen in on Guarino himself as he conducts a recent interview of Bonnie Koloc, a prominent figure on the Chicago folk scene from the 1970s, to gain a firsthand account of her early career and her memories of the landscape of those times.



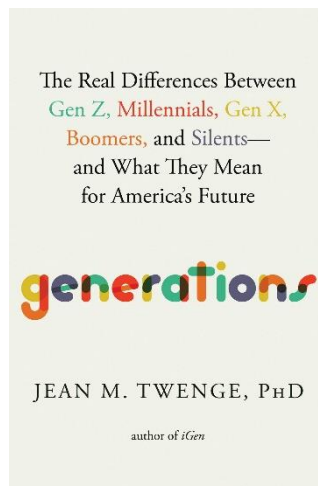
Beyond these discussions, by looking at the Grammy categories for this music, we will try to unravel the reasons behind its growing diversity and why artists and albums are put into certain categories. Throughout our time together, we will engage in a lively exchange of personal experiences and share our favorite songs, singer-songwriters, and memorable moments at folk venues. By collectively exploring this genre, the hope is we will not only deepen our understanding of the music but get to know each other a little better, thereby further fostering a sense of community within the Renaissance Academy.



Book Club – Zoom
February 24, 11:00 AM
Generations
By Jean M. Twenge
Betty Kort – Facilitator

The United States is currently home to six generations: the Silents, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation Alpha. They have had vastly different life experiences and they have vastly diverging beliefs and behaviors--but what are those differences and what causes them.

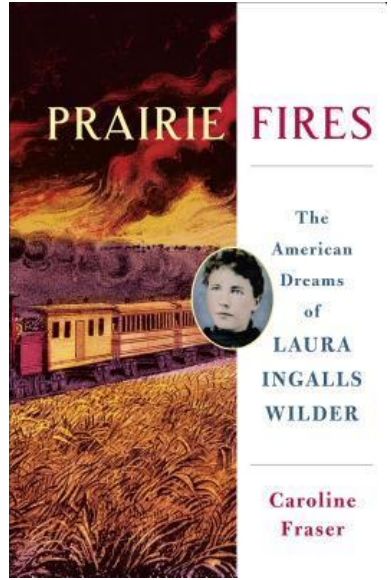
Generations will open your eyes in a new way to see your parents, peers, coworkers, and children, no matter what your generation.



Book Club – Zoom
March 10, 11:00 AM
Prairie Fires
By Caroline Fraser
Sue Wrzesinski – Facilitator

This is one of the best books I have ever read and I was not familiar with *The Little House* books!

The Little House books, for all the hardships they describe, are paeans to the pioneer spirit, portraying it as triumphant against all odds. But Wilder's real life was harder and grittier than that, a story of relentless struggle, rootlessness, and poverty. It was only in her sixties, after losing nearly everything in the Great Depression, that she turned to children's books, recasting her hardscrabble childhood as a celebratory vision of homesteading—and achieving fame and fortune in the process, in one of the most astonishing rags-to-riches episodes in American letters.



Spanning nearly a century of epochal change, from the Indian Wars to the Dust Bowl, Wilder's dramatic life provides a unique perspective on American history and our national mythology of self-reliance. With fresh insights and new discoveries, *Prairie Fires* reveals the complex woman whose classic stories grip us to this day.

Winner of the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for Biography

Memorial Mass and Renaissance Forum March 11, 2025

**10:00 AM Memorial Mass
St. Xavier Mc Donough Chapel**

**11:30 AM Renaissance Forum
Butler Room
Saint Xavier University**

RENAISSANCE FORUM

Women in History

Martina Mathisen

This engaging program is a fascinating look at dynamic women in history that have impacted our lives. The women represented were doing big things, secret things, and even dangerous things. Some were well known, others not well known, each marvelously expressing themselves and their passions.



History comes alive as Martina Mathisen is Annie Oakley who introduces herself with entertaining storytelling to share her life experience. She then introduces her audience to Harriet Tubman and Madame Curie. Without leaving the stage Martina presents Clara Barton and her tales, who then introduces the stories of Anne Sullivan and Florence Nightingale.

Once again without leaving the stage, Martina presents Amelia Earhart who joins the presentation with her marvelous and surprising story to then introduce Bessie Coleman. There are so many women who have made a difference in our American experience. Why these women? Only a few can be chosen and these few were, for a time, all alive on our planet at the same time. The program concludes with a positive and life-affirming message on the difference made by everyone in the room.



The forum is free of charge for Renaissance Academy members. Guests are welcome.

Please mark your calendars: the Spring Forum will be held in the Butler Room Tuesday, March 11th at 11:30 AM.

You will receive an email invitation with a link to RSVP for this event closer to the date of the Forum.

For Your Information

Some have inquired about auditing a class at Saint Xavier University as this is one of the benefits of Renaissance membership.

Saint Xavier University's next term (Spring Term) begins on January 13 and ends on May 10, 2025.

You may find a course catalog on the website:

https://www.sxu.edu/catalog/_resources/documents/undergraduate-catalog-2024-25.pdf

To request to audit a class, complete the audit form and have it signed by the instructor. The processing fee is \$25 for SXU Alums and Renaissance Academy members.

The audit form can be found at,
<https://www.sxu.edu/academics/guidance/records/forms.aspx>,

or the PDF form,
<https://www.sxu.edu/academics/guidance/records/docs/audit-form.pdf>.

Return the completed, form to the records office along with the processing fee to audit the class.

Winter 2025

Dates to Remember

Dec.13 – 27	On line registration
January 16	First day of Winter term
February 24 11:00 AM Zoom	Book Club <i>Generations</i> Betty Kort
February 27	Last day of Winter Term
March 10 11:00 AM Zoom	Book Club <i>Prairie Fires</i> Sue Wrzesinski
March 11 10:00 AM 11:30 AM	Memorial Mass Renaissance Forum



OFFICERS, COMMITTEE & BOARD MEMBERS

2024-2025

President:	Jean Day
Vice President:	Maureen O'Connor
Secretary:	Kerrie Stone
Treasurer:	Mike Greene
Information Systems:	Jim Condon
Consultant:	Eileen M. Holderbaum
SXU Liaison:	Linda Moreno/ Sandra Diaz

STANDING COMMITTEES (*Committee Chairperson)

Care:	Melaine Herbert
Curriculum:	Sue Wrzesinski* /Grace Ann Kartheiser
Forum:	Karen Danczak Lyons* Pat Clair / Therese Cunningham
Historian:	Pat Schultz* / Peggy Devlin Casey
Information Systems Support:	Jim Condon* /Vanessa Glover/ Pat Schultz Mary Johnson / Madonna Murphy /Jim Sim
Membership:	Betty Kort* /Maggie Bertling/Paula O'Brien
Newsletter:	Peggy Dosch*/ Mary Healy Maureen O'Connor
Office Managers:	Mike Yeager*/Vanessa Glover/ Rita Hannon
Publicity:	Carol Conway* / Chris Bibro
Renaissance Booklet:	Mary Johnson* / Grace Ann Kartheiser
Special Events:	Sandra Stephens* / Marci Janas Joyce Martin / Marion McFarland Judy Regan / Sr. Joan Weithman Mike Young