



Renaissance Academy at Chicago NFP

Winter 2026

January 20 – February 26, 2026

Located at

Saint Xavier University

3700 West 103rd Street

We are offering classes on campus on Tuesday and Thursday.

We will also offer classes online on Wednesday 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 2026 Registration

If you enrolled in fall, you are a CURRENT MEMBER and just need to register for classes. Registration runs from December 26, 2025 – January 9, 2026 on line at:

<https://www.renaissancechgo.org>

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

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

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

The final date for registering is January 9, 2026.



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, the Renaissance Curriculum Committee has put together an interesting assortment of classes from which to choose!

We will have three zoom classes on Wednesdays, so those of you who or would like to stay inside to avoid the weather will be able to participate. Teresa Miller will guide us through reading "A Gentleman in Moscow," by Amor Towles. I love spending time with the people who come together to share their interesting perspectives on the books we read. Kathy Konopasek will present a film class, and Bob Ratzel will lead a discussion on choices we will be making during the next phases of our lives.

Our regular Tuesday and Thursday classes will include "News and Views," "Great Decisions," "Birds," "People You Should Know," "Treating Anxiety," and "Making Ethical Decisions;" We will have the opportunity to have "Phun" with Physics and to learn about American Artists.

There will be two music programs this Winter. Betty Kort will share stories behind some of the great musicals, and Ron Small will offer a program on Operettas.

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

Jean Day, President

**Winter 2026 Session
Jan. 20 – Feb. 26
On Campus**

Tuesday 2:30-3:30

- 1. News and Views**
Mike Yeager and team
- 2. The Link between Opera and the American Musical**
Ron Small

Tuesday 3:45- 4:45

- 3. Making Ethical Decisions**
Madonna Murphy
- 4. Treating Anxiety**
Maureen Connolly

Winter 2026 Session
Jan.20 – Feb. 26
On Campus

Thursday 2:30 – 3:30

- 5. Broadway Musicals**
Betty Kort
- 6. Phun with Physics**
Terrence Malloy
- 7. People You Should Know**
Mimi Burke

Thursday 3:45 – 4:45

- 8. Back from the Brink**
Mike Hastings
- 9. Outstanding American Artists**
Sue Wrzesinski
- 10. Great Decisions**
Marcia Levin / Dan Lynch

Winter 2026 Session
Jan. 20– Feb. 26
Zoom

Wednesday

12:00 -1:00

11. Are We on the Same Page?
Teresa Miller

1:30 – 2:30

12. Films You Should Watch
Kathy Konopasek

3:00 – 4:00

**13. Get Your Head Out of the Sand, 'Cause
Easy's Gettin Harder Every Day**
Bob Ratzel

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

1. News and Views

**Jim Condon, Matt Costello, Mary Hendry,
Patrick Monahan, Nancy North, Fred
Wohlberg, and Mike Yeager**

News & Views is a current events exercise. We dip into international and local news, as well as pop culture events. We encourage class participation and are at our best when we hear everyone's opinions.

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.



2. THE LINK BETWEEN OPERA AND THE AMERICAN MUSICAL

Ron Small

From Offenbach in the 1850's, to Gilbert and Sullivan in the 1870's, and from The Golden Age of Strauss II to the Silver Age of Lehar, the operettas kept audiences entertained for a century. Operettas were more lighthearted than the opera but as a genre gave way to the American Musical. Many of the songs are still remembered, although the original productions are forgotten.

Via videos this class will see and hear some of these works.

You will go away each week with a beautiful tune on your mind.



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

3. Making Ethical Decisions Madonna Murphy

How do good people make tough choices? How do we deal thoughtfully with the ethical challenges we face every day with our family, friends and our community. What makes a decision ethical? Is there anything we can do to get our society to be more ethical? To live such virtues as honesty, respectfulness, fairness and compassion ...in order to enable them to take the needs of others into account when making moral decisions. Case studies and moral dilemmas will be used in the class to guide our discussion. This course continues from last term but studying different ethical theorists so all are welcome, even if you did not attend last term.



4. Treating Anxiety

Maureen Connolly

Have you ever considered that you might owe your life to anxiety? Learn how to deal with anxiety in your everyday life and learn about tools that will help you deal with specific types of anxiety.

In the fall sessions Dr. Hendrickson helped us identify and understand the causes and symptoms of numerous anxiety disorders. She taught us various tools and exercises we could employ to help us treat our own anxiety. Now, in the winter sessions, Dr. Hendrickson will walk us through exercises that will help us deal with Social Anxiety, OCD, Perfectionism and Self Criticism. She will also give us tools to help us address uncertainty as well as avoid procrastination.

Lastly, we will be introduced to Dr. Christopher Miller of the University of Maryland School of Medicine. He will answer questions about the types of medication, their effects on the brain, their efficacy and so much more and explore the boundaries between everyday anxiety and clinically significant anxiety that is experienced by about one third of the population in their lifetime.



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

5. Broadway Musicals Betty Kort



Do you enjoy musical theater? You will enjoy this class. I look forward to sharing with you the many memorable moments of Broadway Musicals during our Winter session.



The musical has enthralled, enchanted, and enraptured audiences for more than 100 years.

We will discover together what is the quintessential American art form: the Musical.

Using the many reference books, I will profile some of the best, biggest, most influential, and most fascinating musicals ever produced. The beauty of technology will allow me to share clips and photographs that illustrate the stunning designs of the shows profiled.

The ultimate guide to insider knowledge of Broadway shows is reference material from the library.

There are couple of favorites on the list. *Annie* and *Hello Dolly* are two that I wanted to cover in the Fall session. Who doesn't love to sing out *Tomorrow*?

I will also share what I have learned about *Hello Dolly*. One song in particular, *Before the Parade Passes By* has significance for our generation.

We will also explore the works of Stephen Sondheim, considered a genius of American Musical Theatre. He contributed to so many musicals, starting with *West Side Story*. We are sure to learn more about *Into the Woods*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Sunday in the Park with George*.

Which of Sondheim's musicals do you love? Did you know Sondheim received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2015? His career spanned nearly 70 years.



6. Phun with Physics

Terrence Malloy

With apologies to biologists and chemists, physics is truly the study of life, at least the way we live it today. Machinery and electronics surround us, but few of us really understand how they work. This class will teach you the basic principles of physics and how things work in our everyday life.

1. INTRO or why I like physics better than any other science.
2. HISTORY OF PHYSICS - great scientists and their discoveries, and how they impacted the future of civilization.
3. MECHANICS - the study of how things move and why
4. THERMODYNAMICS AND ENERGY - the study of heat and everything related to it
5. GRAVITY AND ELECTROMAGNETISM - what Newton and Franklin knew before most.
6. NUCLEAR AND RELATIVITY - the energy that powers Chicagoland and the theories that led to that.



7. People You Should Know

Mimi Burke

We will be looking at people in and out of East Asia. A few of them are Kim Jong Un, Kim Yo Jong, Kim Sol Mae, Jonny Kim, and of course Charlie Jenkins.

I hope you come and will enjoy yourself.



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

8. Back from the Brink Mike Hastings

The 2019 Audubon report *Survival by Degrees: 389 Bird Species on the Brink* concluded that two-thirds of North American birds are at risk of extinction due to climate change. Five years later, the *2025 State of Birds Report* data indicates both a continued cause for alarm and signs of hope. This class will examine 7 examples of birds who have experienced severe population decline and encouraging recovery.



We will explore how a combination of birds' natural resilience and human intervention results in dramatic increase in the population of Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Whooping Crane, California Condor, Kirtland's Warbler, Pileated Woodpecker, and Piping Plover.

9. Outstanding American Artists: Winslow Homer, Edward Hopper, Norman Rockwell, Georgia O'Keefe, Wolf Kahn and Amy Sherald

Sue Wrzesinski

These artists are all “realists” in their own unique way and we’ll look at what that really means in a work of art. And, what makes an artist’s work “American”?

Winslow Homer is considered a premier 19th century artist but he took time to mature from an illustrator/war artist to a skilled painter. He was known for his nostalgic scenes of Americana but his later work showed scenes of man struggling in nature. We’ll also look at what makes his watercolors so appealing.

Edward Hopper is known for his signature style characterized by its emphasis on solitude, light, and shadow. Most of his work focuses on modern American urban life and landscapes. Hopper developed his style independent of any of the modern “isms” of his time.

Norman Rockwell always considered himself an Illustrator and earned his living creating iconic American images with his illustrations for the Saturday Evening Post and Life Magazine. He was a Realist in style who created idealistic tableaus of uniquely American characters. How is illustration different from fine art? What is “fine art”?

Georgia O'Keefe carries the title of *The Mother of American Modernism*. O'Keeffe gained international recognition for her paintings of natural forms, particularly flowers and desert-inspired

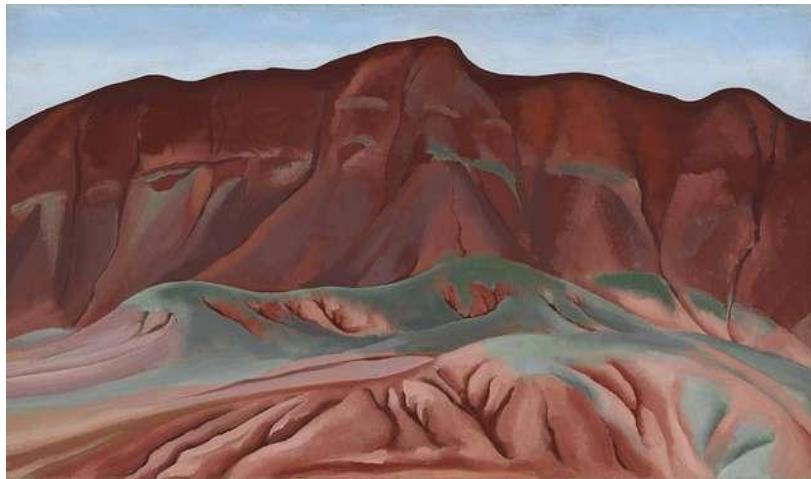
landscapes. O'Keefe was generally considered an abstractionist but her subject was always clearly visible.

Wolf Kahn was known for his combination of Realism, Expressionism and Color Field painting. He trained as an abstract painter but began to fuse Color Field techniques to create luminous landscapes. Is Kahn really a Realist?

Amy Sherald is a currently active portrait artist. She is also considered a Realist and her vibrant portraits challenge traditional notions of race and identity. We'll use Sherald's sales history to talk about how living artists fare in the art market.

As in the past, I will send you links to short videos that enrich the course as well as show some in class. These videos present supporting information and offer images of much better quality than my slide presentation. Here's one to whet your appetite.

Yolk by Duane Keiser, Founder of *A Painting a Day* blog. It's just 3 minutes. <https://youtu.be/AoD4ARaHNOg>



10. Great Decisions

Marcia Levin / Dan Lynch

Twenty years ago, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs published a report on public opinion of foreign policy. This report identified a redefined role for the U.S. with a responsibility in world order but a narrower definition of self-interest and involvement in the affairs of other countries. How can we prepare for a rapidly changing world in international foreign policy without a better understanding of the current pressures and opportunities?

This course will help us better understand what is happening globally and how it may impact us here in this country and abroad in the future. We will be examining Trump's role in current foreign issues, tariffs and the future economy. We will improve our understanding of ruptured alliances and the potential for nuclear proliferation, The situation in Ukraine will be discussed as well as third world development in African nations.



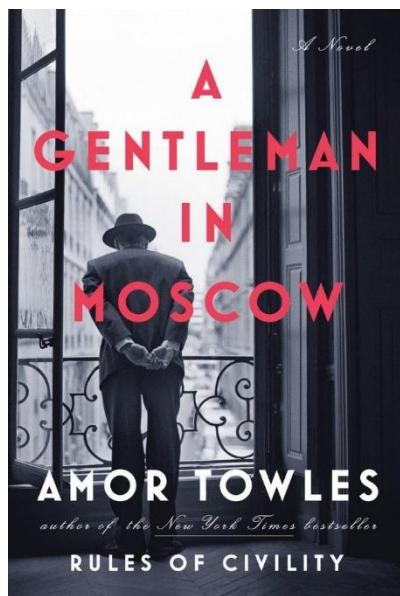
Wednesday Zoom

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM Zoom

11. Are We on the Same Page? Teresa Miller

Is Historical fiction a favorite? If not, consider this group anyway as we learn and revisit history through new perspectives. We meet Wednesdays on Zoom at noon. Come for the “novel” conversations and enjoy a book choice you may not have otherwise selected.

Our book this term is *A Gentleman in Moscow*, by Amor Towles.



1:30 PM – 2:30 PM Zoom

12. Films You Should Watch

Kathy Konapasek

This film class will discuss the creative drive, influences, and development of each featured film. We will use the critical lens to see the difference each film made to the historical, social and cultural atmosphere of its era and the impact, change or entertainment value the film had on the industry. All films are available online: Amazon Prime, Hoopla, through the public library, etc. Class time will also be spent on historical facts, background, and the evolution and production of the films. Class discussion is highly encouraged.

Class 1

African Queen - 1951

The Gods Must be Crazy - 1980

(Both films will be discussed in the first class)

Class 2

Warriors - 1979



Class 3
Raising Arizona - 1987

Class 4
The Secret of Roan Inish - 1994

Class 5
Garden State - 2004

Class 6
Nine - 2009

The theme is setting and culture. Without this milieu, there would not be a story to write or a film to make. What do you think?



3:00 PM – 4:00 PM Zoom

13. Get Your Head Out of the Sand ‘Cause Easy’s Gettin Harder Every Day

Bob Ratzel and Renaissance Supporters

Have you been reviewing the options for your next stage of life? Circumstances can change quickly and there's comfort in having made preparations.

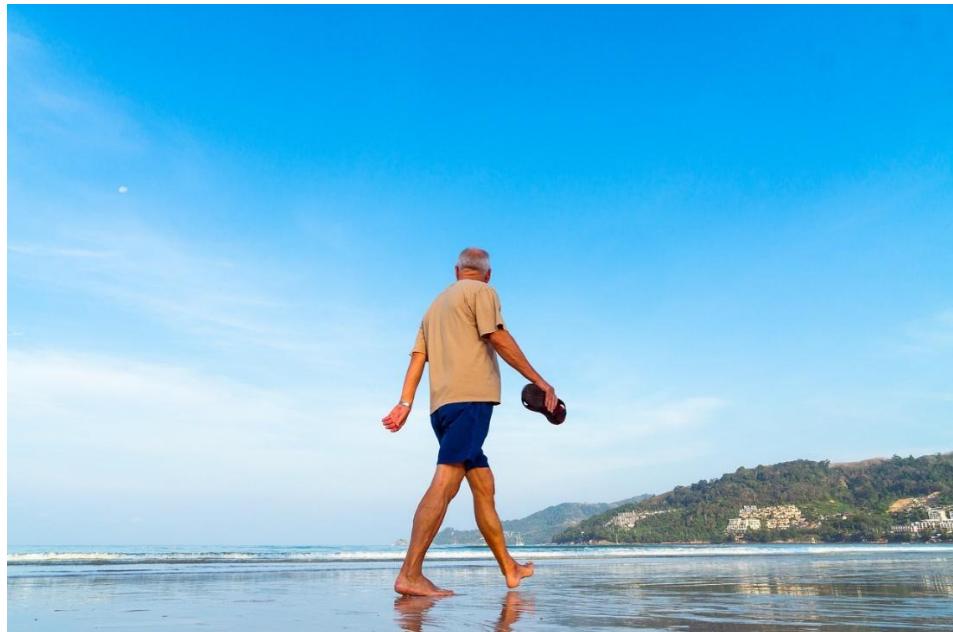
Over the last ten years, I've visited about a dozen community living facilities in three states. I've also attended many programs to learn about a wide variety of local services for seniors.

Even though I thought I was prepared, I suddenly spent 10 days in intensive care, followed by 5 1/2 months in two rehabilitation facilities, followed by home health care. In the last 18 months I've survived 180 days with 10 raucous roommates, 12 days of isolation due to norovirus, occasional abuse and neglect, 150 breakfasts of powdered scrambled eggs and burnt hash browns, 25 aides, 20 OT/PT's, over 2000 pills, a farsighted podiatrist, and abandonment at White Castle on 95th Street!

My Medicare health care report shows hundreds of thousands in billed services and drugs. My AMEX card is looking for weight loss programs.

We'll review our local resources for seniors and ways to find various supports to remain safely and comfortably in our homes, apartment, or condo. We'll talk about family care issues vs. hiring an aide through an agency, or directly with your own contract. Then we'll explore the continuum of senior living - big house, little house/condo, shared housing, active adult communities, senior apartment complexes and continuing care living styles.

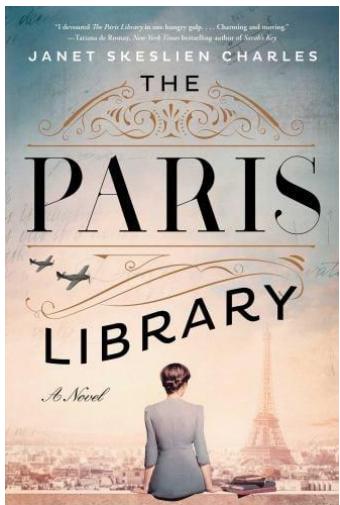
Perhaps you'll volunteer as a CCC scout reviewer? Join us for lively hours of storytelling, information, and laughter while you take steps on the unique journey for you and your family!



Book Club

***The Paris Library* by Janet Skeslien Charles**
February 17 - 11:00 AM
Evergreen Park Library

Betty Kort – Facilitator



If you love libraries and the Dewey decimal system, you'll love this book that chronicles the American Library in Paris during the German occupation - WWII 1939-1945 and a young girl in a small town in Montana, 1983. Young, ambitious, Odile Souchet has it all: Paul, her handsome police officer beau; Margaret, her best friend from England; her adored twin brother Remy; and a dream job at the American Library in Paris, working alongside the library's legendary director, Dorothy Reeder. Also we meet Lily, a curious teen mesmerized by her neighbor, a widow the town calls the war bride.

"...why books? Because no other thing possesses that mystical faculty to make people see with other people's eyes. The library is a bridge of books between cultures."

Join in a thoughtful discussion!

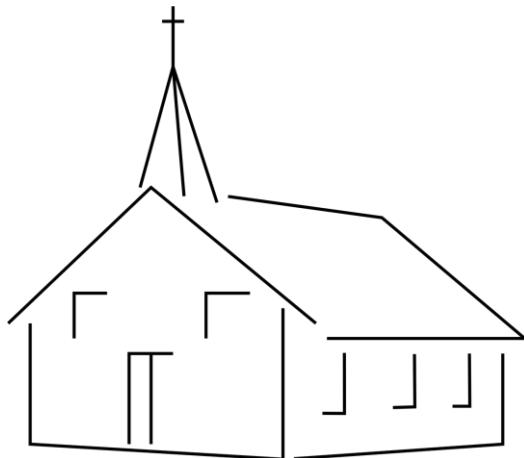
Memorial Mass and Renaissance Forum March 10, 2026

10:00 AM

**Memorial Mass
St. Xavier Mc Donough Chapel**

11:30 AM

**Renaissance Forum
Butler Room
Saint Xavier University**



RENAISSANCE FORUM

Happiness Workshop Mary Sullivan Kopale

Mary Sullivan Kopale is an instructional designer, workshop facilitator, and former high school teacher. While teaching Psychology, Mary became especially interested in positive psychology, a branch of psychology defined by the University of Pennsylvania as the scientific study of what helps people live full lives.

In the hands-on "Happiness Workshop," you will learn some research-supported strategies to reduce stress that are easy to incorporate into your life to help you to be a happier, healthier person. We'll do some individual activities, group activities, and have some laughs, too.

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 10th 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 2026 Dates to Remember

Dec.26	On line registration begins
Jan 6	Winter Course Registration Help Desk S 101 2:30-3:30
Jan. 9	Winter Course Registration Ends
January 20	First day of Winter term
February 17 11:00 AM	Book Club -<i>The Paris Library</i> Evergreen Park Library
February 24	TGITT Butler Room 5 PM-7 PM
February 26	Last Day of Winter Term
March 10	10 AM Memorial Mass 11:30 Forum



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2025-2026

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