LLI Instructor Bios
Spring 2020

Bios are arranged to reflect the sequence of classes within the course catalog. Use Ctrl+F or Cmd+F keyboard shortcut keys to quickly find a specific name.

Christopher R. Versen is a former professor who is now a freelance historian. His research interests include late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century American intellectual and cultural history, the history of science, and American Indian History.

Helmut Hirsch is a Trustees Distinguished Teaching Professor Emeritus whose research interest is in the effects of environment on brain development. He has studied Tai Chi at Asian Arts, Albany NY and is certified by the Tai Chi for Health Institute to teach Tai Chi for Arthritis & Falls Prevention and Tai Chi for Rehabilitation.

Joe Laughland is a life-long amateur photographer/videographer, member of and web master for the Rocktown Camera Club, and previous owner of Laughland Digital Productions, LLC.

Karen Ryder Lee, JMU Staff Emeritus, has contributed to 30 years growth of student and faculty services via software development and leadership. Artist, musician, and native gardening enthusiast, Karen is currently a rooftop solar owner and active volunteer for Climate Action Alliance of the Valley and for Earth Day Every Day.
Natalie Kerr is a professor in the Department of Psychology at JMU, where she has taught for the past 18 years. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Susan Facknitz had the pleasure of teaching Creative Writing and American and Irish Literature at JMU for 32 years. She led Study Abroad trips to Ireland, and spent many months traveling the Irish countryside. Now retired, she leads a writers' group at Blue Ridge Community College and works at the Harrisonburg Visitor Center.

Guillermo (Gil) Fernandez is a native of Nicaragua who came to the United States at age 11. His use of Spanish at home and his public education in English encouraged him to become deeply embedded in both languages and cultures. As a bilingual and bicultural educator, Gil has taught community Spanish classes for various audiences over the past seven years.

Chief Meteorologist Aubrey Urbanowicz is an award-winning Meteorologist at WHSV. Aubrey has been in the Valley for nine years and holds the seal of approval from the National Weather Association.

LLI members Carolyn Frank, Kay Acker, and Sarah Jones have been baking bread for family and friends for years. They have attended the King Arthur's Baking Institute in Vermont and are excited to share their baking knowledge with fellow LLI members.

Wonshé has been a restorative justice practitioner for 16 years in criminal justice and community contexts. She teaches restorative justice to individuals as a way of life and for personal transformation. As Liaison for HPD’s Restorative Justice Program, she also teaches officers as a way to heal harm associated with crime.

Mark Peterson received a Ph.D. in history and worked as a college instructor for several years before becoming a rare book librarian. He currently works in the library and archives research center of the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library.
John Noffsinger earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia, specializing in the 19th century English novel. For 38 years he taught literature and writing in Virginia independent schools.

Pedro Aponte holds a Ph.D. in Historical Musicology from the University of Pittsburgh and is currently Associate Professor of Music History at James Madison University.

Les Grady is an emeritus professor of environmental engineering at Clemson University. Since retirement he has devoted much of his time to the study of climate science and climate change.

Dave Pruett is an emeritus professor of mathematics at JMU, a former NASA researcher, and the author of "Reason and Wonder".

Don Clymer has broad international experience in Latin America and Europe. He recently retired from teaching Spanish at Eastern Mennonite University where he also led semester cross-cultural seminars to Guatemala and Mexico. He has graduate degrees in both Spanish Literature and Spiritual Formation.

Phillip Fusaro has worked with hundreds of students of all ages as a professional instructor of partnership dance. He has been teaching for over 6 years and has trained with professionals in the industry in Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Richmond. He has expertise in over 25 different styles of dance.

George Gruner is a former educator with over 25 years of classroom experience and a life-long student of American history. He has served as a Vermont State Representative and worked in guest services at Monticello. He is employed as a docent at the Woodrow Wilson President Library and Museum in Staunton.

Claudia Hanna has taught Mediterranean cooking classes at JMU, UVA, the Discover More Children's Museum and in her community for over 5 years. She teaches people ages 5 - 100 how to prepare an authentic Mediterranean Diet that she learned from living in Cyprus for over a decade. She loves sharing healthy recipes.
**Pamela Beverage**, Ed.D., LPC has completed more than 13 years of post-doctoral studies in Jungian psychology. Currently she is an advanced analytic candidate in Switzerland at the Research and Training Centre for Depth Psychology. She has facilitated group discussions for more than 40 years.

**Jennifer Cottrell** is a Certified Zentangle® Teacher and has been an arts-and-crafts lover from early childhood. She provides instruction in this wonderful meditative art through JMU Lifelong Learning and through private lessons and parties.

**Jamie Calcagno-Roach** is the Head of Educational Technology team for JMU's Libraries. She loves being in the classroom and has spent the last decade teaching faculty, staff and students different ways to incorporate technology into their teaching and learning. She is a Double Duke with a M.S.Ed. in Adult Education.

**Andrew Connell** is a Professor of Music at James Madison University. An ethnomusicologist with a Ph.D. from UCLA, he is also a professional clarinetist and saxophonist who performs in contexts ranging from Brazilian music to classical and jazz.

**Mélanie Munier Caskill** has been a French instructor at James Madison University since 2017. She was born and raised in France where she was a journalist and a French teacher before moving to Harrisonburg in 2016. Mélanie has a Masters degree in Science of Education, and loves sharing her passion for French language, culture and history.

**Will Dabback** holds degrees in music education from West Chester University and the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music (M.M., 2000, Ph.D. 2007). He served as an instructor and conductor of the New Horizons program at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY, which was the first such program in the country. He currently teaches at JMU.
Anne Henriksen is Faculty Emerita at James Madison University, where she was a professor in the Integrated Science and Technology Department for 19 years. Dr. Henriksen came to JMU from the Los Alamos National Laboratory, where she was a staff scientist for ten years. She received a Ph.D. in chemical physics from the University of Virginia and an MBA in management science from the University of New Mexico. She has spent the last nine years studying neuroscience, neuropharmacology, neuroendocrinology, genomics, and bioinformatics. Her personal interest is understanding the important role of sex steroid hormones in the brain during all stages of life.

Mary Shira teaches art history, studio painting, and creativity at JMU. She has been a professional artist and illustrator for over 35 years, working out of her studio and for clients such as Hearst Publishing and Rosetta Stone.

Hotiman Ridwan is co-owner and Chef at BoBoKo Indonesian Cafe and has worked in the Hospitality Industry for 20 years.

John Bell is a retired Professor of Art (Blue Ridge Community College). He is a practicing artist working in the painting and photography mediums and has traveled extensively in Europe including visits to sites related to Van Gogh's life in The Netherlands, Belgium, and France.

Virginia Cutchin is a lover of all things Chinese; BA (Political Science) and MBA (International Business) holder; Good steward of the Earth; learner; teacher; intercultural trainer/consultant; and certified health coach.

Peter Dalton majored in education in the Social Sciences at the University of Southern Maine and is currently a battlefield guide in the Shenandoah Valley.

David K. McQuilkin has taught History and Political Science at various colleges and universities for more than forty years. He is professor emeritus at Bridgewater College and serves as a political analyst for WHSV.

Wendy Lam is a local Harrisonburg artist using oils, watercolor, colored pencils and pen and ink. Inspired by the beautiful Shenandoah Valley, she paints landscapes, florals, animals, and still life works. Wendy exhibits at the Co-Art Gallery in Staunton.
Mary Louise Loe is Professor Emerita at JMU and has taught in the History Department since 1973. She has her B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison and her M.A. and Ph.D. from Columbia University. Her fields of specialty are Russian History, European History and Human Rights.

Melvin Lee, with degrees from Bridgewater College and JMU, did historical interpretation for the U.S. National Park Service. He plays a variety of folk and early instruments, and his interest in many forms of traditional music has led to lifelong personal research. Melvin produced and hosted public radio folk music programming for over 20 years.

Terri Hoover has been actively acting and directing in community theatre for 25 years. She shares her love of theatre with others through Theatre Workshops.

Ron Smith has taught/directed high school and community theatre as well as acting. He was employed by the Barter Theatre, was on-air talent for WVPT and has filmed commercial advertisements.

Shari Scofield has been teaching meditation for over 10 years. Her training includes MBSR, Mindful Curriculum Design, Level 1 Healing Touch Certification and 200 hours Yoga Teacher Training. Shari's dedication to mindfulness as a foundational practice has led to other explorations which inspire and refresh her work with others.

Kay Arthur is JMU Professor Emerita of Art History, founder of the Semester in Florence, and head of International Programs. Kay specializes in Italian Gothic and Renaissance art, with a particular interest in women artists and patrons. She has taught LLI classes on Florence, other cities in Italy and major painters.

Jean Kinsey is a member of Origami USA and has attended several origami conventions. Jean has taught origami in the Orlando Florida library system and currently teaches origami in Broadway as part of the public library system.
Kathy Guisewite is an adjunct professor at JMU and is the Coordinator of the Caregivers Community Network. She has worked in the fields of counseling, ministry, and teaching. Kathy finds joy in art and has offered workshops and retreats nationally. She honors the beauty found in art and daily life.

Denise Schulz has returned to JMU for equipping to change careers into the field of Arts & Health. With a previous career in Music Ministry, she is now a Master's Student in the Music Education program (May 2020) with an emphasis in music for senior adults and singing for better breathing.

Phil Kniss has spent 35 years in the local Mennonite community, most of those in church leadership. He has been senior pastor at Park View Mennonite Church since 1996. He holds an M.Div. from Eastern Mennonite Seminary in Harrisonburg, and a D.Min. from Northern Seminary in Lombard, IL.

Dave Pruett is Professor Emeritus of applied mathematics at JMU, a former NASA researcher, and author of Reason and Wonder: A Copernican Revolution in Science and Spirit, two chapters of which are devoted to the integrative thought of Teilhard de Chardin.

Tyre Yancey is an author and photographer, whose work is featured in a 2006 book titled, "Vanishing Farms: Tyre Yancey, Locustcrest Farm, and his Photographic Compendium of Valley Farm Structures". In 2012, Tyre published, "RFD Folk Art", containing photographs of unique folk art mail boxes.

An avid birder and photographer, Diane Lepkowski serves on the Virginia Society of Ornithology Board of Directors and is Rockingham Bird Club's Vice-President of Field experiences. With a B.S. in Education, she is a teacher at heart and loves inspiring others to learn more about the amazing world of birds.

Jean Cash is Professor of English emerita, James Madison University. Her specialty is Southern Literature with special emphasis on writers from the Southern Literary Renaissance (1920s) forward. Jean has taught many seminars on the work of William Faulkner.

Carrie McGary has been an avid knitter for 18 years. She began teaching several years ago, and currently owns and operates Magari Yarn and Dyeworks.
Robin McNallie completed graduate study at Princeton in the field of English. For 33 years, until retirement in 1998, he taught courses in literature, film, and writing at James Madison University. Since that time, he has taught courses for LLI on more than 20 topics.

Ralph Allen is a retired faculty member of the University of Virginia, where he served as a Professor of Chemistry, Environmental Science, and Public Health Science. He has also previously served as the Associate Vice President for Research at UVA.

Michael Moghtader is an associate professor and academic advising coordinator for JMU's Interdisciplinary Liberal Studies Program. Since 2003, he has researched, taught courses, and read widely in American environmental humanities. He lives in Harrisonburg, VA, with two busy Border collies.

Mike Deaton is a musician and facilitator with over 20 years of experience. His interactive programs and fun teaching style promote JOY over technique. Mike has dedicated his life to using musical tools and expressive arts to empower people and help them create their own positive transformations.

Carla Yoder has a Bachelor's degree in Studio Arts and minors in Theatre and Art History. She has been designing floral art and events for over 27 years.

Donna Armstrong is a retired professor of epidemiology and public health who researched social and environmental sustainability, specifically focusing on food growing. After retiring, she farmed in Kentucky. She now practices Permaculture Design and urban food growing in Harrisonburg, VA.

Frank Doherty, a 30-year Rockingham County resident, is an avid photographer, member of the Rocktown Camera Club and OASIS Fine Art & Craft Gallery, and former James Madison University administrator. He has photographed the local community for more than 15 years, and his photos are displayed in the JMU Admissions Office and Oakview, which serves as the president's home.
Elena Guolo, whose mother language is Italian, has been teaching Italian since 2002. First in Istanbul, Turkey, until 2012 and then at JMU since 2012. She has a BA and MA in foreign languages from Ca' Foscari University, Venice, Italy.

Ken Nafziger is Professor of Music Emeritus, Eastern Mennonite University. Ken taught at EMU for 40 years and is founder and artistic director (since 1993) of the Shenandoah Valley Bach Festival. Ken was awarded the 2015 Circle of Excellence in the Arts Award from the Forbes Center, Arts Council of the Valley, and JMU Arts Colleges.

Paul Hildebrand is a recently-retired professor of Theatre and Communication. He currently is an adjunct instructor at the Shenandoah Valley Governor's School, teaching a survey course in Western Culture for juniors, and Intro to Communication for seniors. He has been a passionate Wagnerian since he was a young teenager, and has led guided journeys through the RING over many years for people of all ages.