PROFILE

Michael Smith

Passion for good books stirs OLLI students

“Things don’t change.” That’s Michael Smith’s comment after teaching his winter course on Shakespeare’s “bad kings,” Richards II and III and Macbeth. “The students in the OLLI class found parallels in the politics of six centuries earlier with today’s politics and politicians.”

An Old Orchard Beach native, Michael graduated from Cornell University with a degree in government. He started law school, “but that wasn’t for me.” Yet what he gained in those law classes turned out to be useful when he went to work for Maine state government.

His role was as a Hearing Officer in cases that came before the Registry of Motor Vehicles. He then moved over to the Department of Labor and unemployment benefit hearings.

Upon retirement in 2008, he took courses at OLLI. “But then I asked myself how I could contribute to OLLI. So I made a proposal for a course and OLLI accepted it.” He remembers the words of another veteran faculty member: “She told me that the teacher learns the most from preparing the course. And she was right.”

Michael has had a passion for good fiction since college days. He’s also been steered in that direction by his wife, who has a master’s degree in literature. His earlier courses on terrorism in contemporary fiction and on Henry James’s *Portrait of a Lady* were indicative of the breadth of his interests.

His deep interest in Shakespeare led to his preparing his course, “How to be a bad king: Shakespeare on stage and screen.” He’s seen numerous productions, including those at Stratford, Ontario; in London; and throughout the US.

“What I strove for in my courses was to open the students

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As the winter term is winding down, and the spring term is gearing up, it seems like this might be a good time to review some basic OLLI policies.

- We hold a registration lottery to make the initial registration as fair as possible. We mail over 1500 catalogs via bulk mail. Because of bulk mail, catalogs arrive in various towns on different dates. We can guarantee that everyone who gets their registration in by the lottery date has a fair and equal chance of getting into the class of their choice. This spring, only two classes were oversubscribed and needed to be put to a lottery.
- Registrations are accepted until classes begin.
- About two weeks before the start of the term, classes with fewer than eight students are canceled. Anyone in a canceled class will be called by the OLLI office.
- Full refunds are available for a class dropped by the end of the second week of the term. This is a policy of USM as well as OLLI. Anyone needing to drop a class after that time is encouraged to speak with the staff.

We work hard to make OLLI as fair as possible without lots of bureaucracy. We encourage you to share any concerns you might have with any member of the OLLI Advisory Board or the OLLI staff.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

USM to host conference on the power of life stories

USM will host the first in what is hoped will be a biannual series of programs celebrating the power of life stories on Thursday evening, April 26, and all day Friday, April 27. The theme for the 2012 conference is “Active Caring: Life Stories of Helping in a Challenging Environment.”

On Thursday evening at 7:00 p.m., Dr. Kristen Monroe from the University of California at Irvine will give the keynote address. Dr. Monroe’s book, *The Heart of Altruism: Perceptions of a Common Humanity* has been nominated for the Pulitzer Prize. This talk will take place in the Wishcamper Center, and a reception will follow. There is no charge to attend the Thursday night event.

Friday, April 27, consists of a full day of activities including artist showcases; poster sessions on research that has been conducted on this topic; a description of The Moral Courage Project, which grew out of listening to stories of active caring; a presentation called “Giving and Receiving Help and Support in Post- Katrina New Orleans” by guest presenters from New Orleans; and a session on memoir writing conducted by three active members of the USM-OLLI community.

The all-day program costs $45, which includes coffee breaks, lunch, and program materials.

For more information and to download a registration form, please visit the following website: [http://tinyurl.com/act-care](http://tinyurl.com/act-care)
Advisory Board

I have just a couple of items to mention this month.

**OLLI Member Survey** — You should receive The OLLI Member Survey either via e-mail, a link to take it on-line, or in print form through the mail if you do not normally communicate with OLLI through e-mail. I encourage you to complete the survey, as it is truly helpful to the Board as it plans how to sustain the quality and breadth of offerings to the membership each year. Thank you in advance for your interest and help.

**OLLI Board Nominations** — We are seeking nominations to the Advisory Board for a three-year term beginning July 2012. If you are interested in a self-nomination or know of a good candidate willing to serve, please contact Claire Knox, Nominating Committee Chair, at [topdown@roadrunner.com](mailto:topdown@roadrunner.com) for information and a nomination form.

—Dick Sturgeon, Board Chair [rbsturgeon@juno.com](mailto:rbsturgeon@juno.com) 773-3174

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**OLLI members beware**

An OLLI instructor left his laptop in the classroom while he ran to the bathroom. When he returned, the laptop was gone.

Please remember that Wishcamper is a public building with many people wandering around. So take care of your belongings.

**OLLI Spring Term Reminders**

- Classes begin the week of March 19.
- SAGE lectures start March 20. All lectures will be held in Hannaford Hall.
- OLLI is paying for parking so you don’t have to. Push the button at the gate for garage access and the exit gate will rise upon approach.
- Please turn off or silence cell phone pagers when you come to class.
- Please refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or after-shave when you come to OLLI. Some students have allergic reactions to them.

**Summer course proposal deadline nears**

For those of you who are planning a course for the summer term, remember that the deadline for submitting proposals is March 14. If you need a proposal form, call the OLLI office or visit the OLLI website: [http://usm.maine.edu/olli/propose-course-or-workshop-olli-usm](http://usm.maine.edu/olli/propose-course-or-workshop-olli-usm)
to the value of literary criticism so they could understand the fiction more deeply. I’ve likewise found
the students were eager to open up and discuss what they read and saw, and differ with each other gen-
tly.”

Michael balances the texts of the plays with films, as he did in his Shakespeare course. He had earli-
er found that showing a film on the James novel helped some students gain something they didn’t find
in reading Portrait of a Lady.

In his Shakespeare course, Michael began his introduction by telling the class about resources avail-
able for continuing and expanding their interest in Shakespeare: DVDs, recordings, videos, and print
resources, particularly works of criticism.

Michael leans toward British actors such as Judy Dench and Ian McKellen because they are trained
as stage actors and know how to project to a theater audience, while American actors tend to be trained
for TV or movies.

By the way, he is a traditionalist. He believes Shakespeare wrote Shakespeare.

—Don King

Would you like to talk with a foreign student?

You are invited to join USM undergrad English language learners in International Conversations on
Thursday afternoons from 1:15 to 3:15, April 5 to May 3, in room 102 of the Wishcamper Center.

This is an opportunity to engage in fascinating conversations with students from many countries,
including Japan, China, Colombia, Belgium, Congo, Ukraine, Lebanon, India, Dominican Republic,
and Saudi Arabia.

Classroom instructors will suggest topics and offer interactive activities to keep the classroom lively.
There is no charge for OLLI members.

Please contact Jessamyn Schmidt (jessamyn_schmidt@yahoo.com or 780-4586) to join the con-
versations.

Reflections deadline extended

Procrastinators, you have a reprieve! The deadline for submitting stories, memoirs, poems, art,
and photos to Reflections, OLLI’s annual journal of art and literature, has been extended until
April 1. Pick up a submission form from the OLLI office or ask them to e-mail you one. There are
separate forms for writing and art this year, so be sure to ask for the one you need.

A couple small details: Fiction and memoir are limited to 1,000 words maximum. Art and pho-
tos should be submitted electronically. If needed, you can take a digital picture of your art.

Details are on the submission form.
So you think you can teach

Okay, maybe you think you can’t teach. In either case, I want to offer some encouragement.

OLLI courses have been created by all sorts of folks. Some continued what they taught before retirement. John Sutherland’s and Draper Hunt’s history courses come to mind, as well as Tim Byrnes’s photography courses. Some courses are based on lifelong avocations. Psychology courses by Jack Lynch come to mind. Some courses reflect a newly discovered passion. My course on Zen basics comes to mind.

What could you share with a dozen or two dozen of your fellow OLLI members? Forget for a moment the details (and maybe the horror) of standing up in front of a class. Just daydream a bit.

Now let’s think about creating a course. Here are some things to consider.

• Our terms are six and eight weeks for courses and more variable for workshops. What could you cover in six weeks, eight weeks, three two-hour workshops, an all-day workshop? Make a list of topics you would cover.

• What is the most appropriate way to present your material? Think of a stand-up lecture, a seminar with discussion, a participatory experience, or some combination, or something entirely different. This decision is based on both the material and the style of teaching you prefer. A history course, for instance, could be a straight lecture, a seminar based on out-of-class readings, or a participatory experience with students choosing topics and making presentations.

• For each topic, how much can you cover in two hours, minus about 20 minutes for a break, late arrivals, and general schmoozing? I’ve taken two approaches in the courses I teach: prepare for more than two hours and be ready to drop some topics; or prepare for less than two hours and count on either ad-libbing or expanding class discussion. And I realize that these are just estimates anyway. I’ve prepared for more than two hours and run out of things to say after an hour and a quarter. I’ve also planned for less than two hours and had such lively class discussion that some topics had to be dropped.

• What aids will you need, such as PowerPoint slides, DVD player, CD player, overhead projector? Most or all OLLI classrooms have a computer, media player, projector, and overhead projector. How will they be incorporated into your presentation? (And there’s help available to figure out the equipment.)

• What book or handouts will you need, if any? Is the book required or recommended?

When you’ve finished with this little exercise, you’ll have a roadmap of your course, and teaching will feel a lot less like stepping over a precipice.

In future articles, we’ll explore more: course proposals, teaching styles, managing discussions (getting people to talk, staying on topic, dealing with monopolizers, and the like), and other suggestions.

If you’re ready with ideas right now, check out the course and workshop proposal form and other useful information at http://usm.maine.edu/olli/propose-course-or-workshop-olli-usm

Three final thoughts for now: (1) Be prepared to have fun! Most of us instructors find teaching one of our most rewarding activities. (2) Get in touch with the Education Committee for brainstorming or encouragement. The chair is Joan Aldrich: aldrich1822@gmail.com or 799-2931. She’ll put you in touch with someone. (3) Watch for an instructors’ workshop, to be offered in April.

—Tim Baehr
Volunteer recognition luncheon

Do you know a volunteer when you see one? Well, if it’s an instructor, that’s easy. All our OLLI instructors are volunteers. And if you ever visit the OLLI office, that’s easy, too. The people who greet you at the desk (and register you for classes, and do general problem-solving) are volunteers.

Then there are all the less-visible volunteers who, along with instructors and office volunteers, keep OLLI running. It’s safe to say that OLLI would either not exist without volunteers, or OLLI membership and class fees would be much higher.

Who are these people? They arrange day-trip expeditions, long trips, and community events such as Ninth Week and the art shows. They recruit new faculty and provide support for all the instructors. They approve and keep track of special interest groups. They take us on interesting walks. They arrange ski trips. They host a monthly OLLI Night Out. They create the fall and spring SAGE lectures, and write and edit the flyer. They produce the OLLI Follies. They edit, proofread, and lay out this newsletter and Reflections, the annual literary and arts journal. They decorate our hallway with original art. They write articles for the MSCN Newsletter. They raise money through the raffle and book sale and by securing grants. They set OLLI policy.

There are 74 non-instructor volunteers at OLLI, with some overlap among the instructor ranks. And 62 of those volunteers were able to come and be recognized and feted at a luncheon in the Wishcamper Center on February 17. No long speeches, just socializing and winning donated door prizes.

If 74 volunteers seems too few given the amount of work they do and what they accomplish, you’re right. Many of the volunteers fulfill multiple roles. Things have worked pretty well so far, but as OLLI keeps growing (1500 members!), more volunteers are essential.

If you have enjoyed classes, workshops, or special interest groups at OLLI, or if you’ve enjoyed SAGE, or if you’ve enjoyed any of the other activities, and want to give back, inquire at the OLLI office.

Here are a few pictures of the happy people at the luncheon, taken by Don King (a long-time OLLI volunteer!).

Tim Baehr and Ann Landsberg

Tan and Joy Larrabee

Sherrie Chapman and Pat Muzzy
Weather conditions affect Walking Club’s plans

The Walking Club will meet at the Back Cove parking lot across from Hannaford’s at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14, and again on Tuesday, March 27.

On both days the group will decide where to walk, based on the weather and conditions underfoot — perhaps Evergreen Cemetery, around Back Cove, or through a local neighborhood.

Bring your lunch and water. If you have questions, call Pat LeFebvre at 883-2936.

Ski club members give winter one last chance

With our mild winter, OLLI Ski Club members have been seen tuning up their road bikes and roller blades. Still, we’re giving winter one last chance in March. Cross-country skiers will again have a standing date every Friday this month. Plans include the following:

**March 2** — Bradbury Mountain, side trails. Contact Libby Hyatt 729-8721.
**March 9** — Pineland Farm. Contact Made- lyn Murphy 885-9720.
**March 16** — Riverside Golf Course. Contact Susanne Maarten 650-8433.
**March 23** — LL Bean Fogg House. Contact Libby Hyatt 729-8721.
**March 30** — Smiling Hill. Contact Bev Blair 799-5043.

Downhill skiers will head to Bretton Woods on Wednesday, March 7, and to Mt. Abram on Thursday, March 22. Contact Steve Donahoe at stevedonahoe1@gmail.com or 239-6517.

Ski events depend on weather conditions, so be sure to sign up for an event in order to get updates, carpool info, and last-minute alerts. To join our Member Directory/e-mail list, whether for this season or next, send an e-mail to Steve at the e-mail address above.

DiMillo’s next stop for night-outers

Our March OLLI Night Out will be at one of the well-known eateries in Maine — DiMillo’s on the Water.

So join OLLI friends for dinner on Tuesday, March 20, at 5 p.m. at this excellent waterfront restaurant.

DiMillo’s is on Commercial Street in Portland. There is plenty of free parking, and there are wonderful dinner specials at reasonable prices.

To make reservations, e-mail Terry at tfoster@maine.edu or call him at 780-4895. Let him know how many will be in your party and if you need a ride.

DiMillo’s on the Water
Special discount/discussion for OLLI members at April 15 performance of AIRE’s next show, *Faith Healer*

AIRE (American Irish Repertory Ensemble) presents *Faith Healer*, a powerful meditation on truth and belief that focuses on itinerant faith healer Frank Hardy, his wife, and his manager as they travel to remote towns throughout the British Isles, where Frank attempts to cure the sick and suffering. All three characters tell about significant events in their 20 years together, but the perspective — and even the facts — change in each version, leaving the audience to determine the truth.

**OLLI members and their guests are invited to attend the matinee on Sunday, April 15, at 3:00 p.m. at a reduced price of $15 per ticket.** The play takes place at The Studio Theatre at Portland Stage. After the performance, Bob Lyons, who teaches Irish theater, film, and literature at OLLI, will lead a discussion with the director and members of the cast. Reservations are necessary to get this special ticket price, so please call 207-799-5327 or e-mail airetheater@yahoo.com and mention that you are an OLLI member.

**Join AIRE’s OLLI E-Mail List**

If you’d like to receive e-mails about upcoming AIRE events, including special offers to OLLI members, please write to them at airetheater@yahoo.com and request to be put on our OLLI e-mail list.