2027 ELLA Online Winter Session
Course Details and Instructor Bios

Please note: 12 of the 16 courses will be recorded live. Individual lessons will be available by 10:00 a.m. the next day and can be viewed for 14 days. The last week of each course will only be available for seven days after the last class ends.

SCIENCE

27-S101 How Virtual Reality is Transforming Real Life

MTWThF 7:00-8:00 pm, Jan 25 to Feb 12, 2027 This course is NOT recorded.

Virtual reality (VR) transports users into a simulated three-dimensional environment, enabling them to explore and interact with virtual worlds that closely resemble real-life experiences through vision, hearing, and other sensory inputs. This comprehensive course provides an introduction to the technologies that underpin VR and explores how it creates these immersive experiences. Participants will learn the fundamental principles of VR design, human perception and user interaction, while gaining an appreciation of the opportunities and challenges associated with this rapidly evolving technology. We will showcase how VR is being applied across diverse healthcare settings, including surgical simulation, rehabilitation, pain management and mental health interventions such as depression treatment. The course combines online lectures, interactive demonstrations and real-world case studies to illustrate both the capabilities and limitations of VR in healthcare. Together, we will explore how VR is reshaping the future of medicine and transforming the way we learn, practice and deliver healthcare.

Instructor: Bin Zheng

Dr. Zheng is a full professor in surgery and holds the Endowed Research Chair in Surgical Simulation position in the Department of Surgery of the University of Alberta. He collaborates with surgeons, engineers, clinical educators and psychologists to develop simulators and evaluate the educational outcomes of simulation-based programs. Virtual reality has been integrated deeply in the simulation design in Dr. Zheng research lab. The long-term goal is to promote the use of simulation with virtual reality technology for improving care quality and patient safety.

27-S102 The Human Cell: Building Blocks of Life

T 4:00-5:00 pm, Jan 12 to Mar 2, 2027 This course IS recorded.

The Human Cell: Building Blocks of Life is an engaging eight-session course that introduces learners to cells and the remarkable processes that make life possible. Participants will explore how cells are structured, use DNA, communicate, produce energy, divide and respond to their environment. The course also considers what happens when normal cellular processes change during infection, aging and disease. Comparisons with plants, microbes and other organisms will show both the similarities

and diversity of life at the microscopic level. Clear explanations, familiar examples and strong visuals will make complex biology approachable for learners without a scientific background. The final sessions will introduce current and emerging developments in cell science and encourage discussion about how this research may influence medicine, health, food and society in the future. No previous knowledge of biology is required, only curiosity about how the living world works and affects us every day.

Instructor: Tristan Mula

Tristan Mula holds a BSc in biology and an MA in anthropology from the University of Alberta where she specialized in forensic and biological anthropology. Her graduate research examined the preservation of saw marks in burned bone and how heat affects their forensic interpretation. She has taught biological anthropology labs and delivered workshops and presentations for students, police services and community groups. With a background that brings together biology, forensic science and hands-on teaching, Tristan enjoys making complex scientific ideas clear, interesting and approachable.

27-S103 Exploring Alberta's Natural World

Th (+ T Feb 9) 7:00-8:00 pm, Jan 14 to Mar 4, 2027 This course IS recorded.

This course offers a comprehensive overview of the work of Nature Alberta and its member organizations as active champions for the greater appreciation and conservation of nature in Alberta. "A Community Connected by a Love of Nature", the team of speakers will unlock a great expanse of Alberta's natural world. Experts will present a variety of topics from projects documenting our biodiversity to research on local species, to deep dives into species identification, to tackling conservation issues. Participants will complete the course with a greater sense of awe for the natural world, equipped with new ways to contribute to nature conservation across diverse interests.

Instructor: Stephanie Weizenbach

Stephanie Weizenbach is the Executive Director with Nature Alberta. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental and conservation sciences with hands-on conservation work experience through a land trust and wildlife rehabilitation centre. Stephanie has coordinated an incredible lineup of guest presenters including Bradley Peter (Alberta Lake Management Society), Corrianne Brons (Alberta Lepidopterists' Guild), Alyssa Metro (Alberta Amphibian & Reptile Conservancy), Zoltan Domahidi, (Boreal Avian Research & Conservation Association), Martin Osis (Alberta Mycological Society), Glen Hvenegaard (Camrose Wildlife Stewardship Society), Kallum McDonald (Alberta Native Plant Council) and Megan Evans (Alberta Invasive Species Council).

27-S104 Climate Change: Should I Worry?

TWTh 10:00-11:00 am, Feb 11 to Mar 4, 2027 This course IS recorded.

This course will offer participants a broad overview of issues surrounding climate change at an international, provincial and local level. It will focus on the Alberta context and relate that to national and international scales and similarities or contrasts. Topics will attempt to cover the whole spectrum of society and nature from first order effects and derivatives. Public and private policies will be introduced and highlighted from local

to international agreement scales. Rather than diving into depth, we will try to cover all topics, natural systems, ecosystem services (agriculture, forestry, recreation), urban and policy issues (flood forecasting, building standards, insurance, etc.) as brief introductions to the dimensions of the issues of climate change. The course will consist of lectures from guest speakers, including ample time for Q&A.

Instructor: Thomas Goddard

Tom has worked in the agriculture and environmental sectors in government and consultant functions in Alberta and beyond, where climate change and weather have intersected his work. He has attended annual global climate change meetings (UNFCC-COPs), participated at side events and been part of other meetings focused upon climate change issues directly or tangentially. His work in other countries and continued collaborations with colleagues around the world continue to appreciate scales, systems and complexities of human enterprises in natural and built environments.

WELLNESS AND LEISURE

27-W101 Mental Health Hodge-podge

TWTh 1:00-2:00 pm, Jan 12 to Feb 11, 2027 This course IS recorded.

In this course, we will discuss a smattering of different mental wellness topics, including: How to create a meaningful life after retirement; Mental health vs mental illness (normal emotional changes vs concerning issues as we age); Balance and boundaries (and saying no without guilt); How to create fun and play in life after 60 (why being "sensible" is not always smart), and Living with uncertainty (instead of trying to control it). There will be some limited room made available on the first day of class for participants to make suggestions about other topics they wish to discuss, and the appropriate content will be added to the course.

Instructor: Kim Silverthorn

Kim Silverthorn is a registered master practitioner of clinical counselling through the Canadian Professional Counsellors Association, and a clinical therapist through the Association of Counselling Therapy in Alberta. Kim is the owner/primary therapist at Tacit Knowledge, a counselling practice based in Beaumont. She has been a therapist for about 35 years, and often works with clients who have specialized needs (First Responders, teaching staff, Children's Services families, etc.) For more than 10 years Kim has been writing a regular mental health article *("Dear Tacit"*) which is featured weekly in newspapers and online news sites across Canada. Kim also offers a broad range of professional learning sessions for groups/agencies who want to strengthen their own skills in the mental health field or who are interested in creating a healthier working environment within their own team.

27-W102 Fall Prevention: Stay Strong, Stay Safe!

MWF 2:00-3:00 pm, Jan 11 to Feb 12, 2027 This course IS recorded.

How do you decrease the chances of falling? What is the proper way to get up after a fall? Did you know you can increase your strength and balance using minimal

equipment and this will decrease the chance of severe injury from a fall? This course will have a two-pronged approach. The first half of the class will teach you why it is important to stay functionally fit, how to decrease pain and how to prevent falling. The second half will be incorporating physical exercises into your daily routine and how to turn theory into reality. When you finish this course, you will have a better understanding of how the body works, how to identify red flags in your own daily movement and you will feel stronger and more confident. All fitness levels are welcome. A kitchen chair, dumbbells and a massage ball are the only tools you will need to fight back against the aging body!

Instructor: Tonia Leske

Tonia Leske has spent the last 19 years improving people's health by focusing on their functional fitness to ensure independent living for as long as possible. She has trained people privately in their homes, managed the Royal Alexandra Hospital gym for AHS and teaches online functional classes for seniors. Primarily, Tonia specializes in senior health, providing functional training to decrease pain, prevent injury and increase strength and balance. She is also an advocate for senior health in Alberta, participating in talks for the Royal Alex and the Mazankowski Heart Institute.

27-W103 Getting Going with Google

MWF 4:00-5:00 pm, Jan 29 to Mar 5 This course IS recorded.

Sure, you've used Google to search the Internet before, but are things like Google Drive or Google Docs, Sheets and Slides still a mystery? Do you use Gmail? If so, would you like to get your Inbox under control? Join us to see how Google can provide an affordable alternative to Microsoft Office and get comfortable with the idea of computing "in the cloud". It is a different way of doing things, but it is also the wave of the future. This course will be a leisurely paced fun introduction to a wide array of what Google has to offer, and the basic skills you need to make the most of your Google experience. Basic keyboard and mouse skills are a must, as this will be a computer-based course.

Instructor: Shawn Gramiak

Shawn Gramiak has taught software skills at MacEwan University for over 25 years. His other clients include ELLA and Northgate and Central Lions Recreation Centres. He has also provided training services to the provincial government of Alberta, Metro Continuing Education, Edmonton Public Schools, Enbridge and a host of private tutorial clients. Teaching constantly reminds Shawn of how much more he needs to learn, and that the pursuit of knowledge is a key to happiness. Shawn also enjoys cooking, gardening and is working his way to becoming a small-scale vermicomposting worm rancher.

27-W104 Tai Chi Walking

MTh 11:00-12 Noon, Jan 11 to Mar 4, 2027 This course IS recorded.

A step-by-step guide to cultivating balance, calm and mindful movement. Tai Chi Walking transforms ordinary walking into a slow, intentional, meditative practice, developing strength and balance along the way. Each step becomes an opportunity to

feel grounded, centred and fully present. Tai Chi Walking is not just an exercise — it can also be a moving meditation. Besides the physical benefits of increased strength, balance and mobility, it teaches patience, presence, inner balance, inner quiet and grace in motion. With consistent practice, the slow steps of Tai Chi Walking begin to influence everyday life - helping you move with more ease, awareness and confidence.

Instructor: Bradley Schultz

Brad Schultz has been studying and practicing Martial Arts, Meditation and Healing Arts since 1980. In 1996 Brad established the Abundant Peace Aikido and Tai Chi School as a centre from which to offer the arts of health enhancement, personal development and empowerment. Brad's ongoing focus is to offer ways to take charge of one's health and actualize one's full potential through the life-enhancing arts of Tai Chi, Chi Gong and Meditation.

HUMANITIES

27-H101 Ethics in a Divided World: 15 Challenges to Global Sustainable Development

TThF 6:00-7:00 pm, Feb 2 to Mar 5, 2027 This course is NOT recorded.

This will be a unique class on the theory (or theories) underpinning the world's developmental goals. Taught by a former UNESCO consultant, each lesson will open up a new challenge hidden under the world's aspirations under the banner of 'sustainable development'. As vital as these goals are, the theory underpinning them is rarely examined and reveals a wealth of questions ripe for discussion. Where did these goals come from? How have they become universal touchstones for applied ethics? Have they been successful? Perhaps most importantly, what theories, ideas or systems are they based on? Drawing from a mix of applied and theoretical ideas, the course will juxtapose the UN Sustainable Development Goals with philosophical topics ranging from human rights, moral capital, sustainability, post-development, charity, Realpolitik and the limits of international agreements.

Instructor: Daniel Greenways

Daniel is a returning teacher with ELLA, back again after last year's philosophy course "Searching for a Meaningful Life." Originally from Edmonton, Daniel holds three degrees in philosophy and is working on a doctorate in applied philosophy at the University of Waterloo. He has taught this subject for years to people from all walks of life. Since 2025 he has been an instructor for St. Joseph's College at the University of Alberta. In that role, he recently wrote and delivered the university's first philosophy course on the ethics and policy of sustainable development. This is a major topic of Daniel's current research, dating back to when he worked for several years as a consultant at UNESCO HQ. The lessons he teaches on this subject are a mix of theory and practice, stories and ideas. He is thrilled to bring a new course on this subject to ELLA this winter.

27-H102 The Bayeux Tapestry Returns

T 1:00-2:00 pm, Jan 12 to Mar 2, 2027 This course is NOT recorded.

Shortly after the Battle of Hastings in 1066, a 220-foot-long embroidery portrayed the successful invasion by William the Conqueror. Although made in England, the Tapestry was taken to Bayeux in Normandy. Over centuries of remarkable escapes, it remained in France - until now. In September 2026 the Bayeux Tapestry was loaned to the British Museum. After an absence of almost 1,000 years this world treasure is back again in the land of its creation. Its story is one of survival, support and good luck!

Instructor: Alana Gowdy

Originally from Northern Ireland, Alana completed her doctoral studies in Canada. She has taught at every level from elementary to university. In her retirement Alana is delighted to share her enthusiasm for medieval history with lifelong learners.

27-H103 Oil, Populism and the Political Economy of Alberta

MW 10:00-11:30 am, Jan 11 to Feb 10, 2027 This course IS recorded.

Alberta's recent political history has been tumultuous. This course examines Alberta's unique political culture, its history of populism and federal-provincial relations. It also examines the role of oil and gas, Indigenous peoples and urbanization in the province's development. Specific focus is given to the province's finances and expenditures, particularly in areas of education, health and social services. The course also explores the external environment impacting Alberta, notably the presidency of Donald Trump. The course concludes with a look at the premiership of Danielle Smith and the future of democracy in Alberta.

Instructor: Trevor Harrison

Trevor W. Harrison is a retired political sociologist at the University of Lethbridge. He is the author, co-author, or co-editor of fourteen previous books, including three books of poetry. His recent and fifteenth book, *"Safarnameh: A Traveller's Journey Along the Hippie Trail"*, is both a personal memoir and a critical examination of the circumstances around why so many westerners made the overland trip to India during the 1960s and 1970s.

27-H104 Architecture of the Twentieth Century: The Skyscraper and the Suburb

T 7:00-8:00 pm, Jan 12 to Mar 2, 2027 This course IS recorded.

The Twentieth Century was an excitingly tumultuous time in our built environment - optimistic yet savage, brazen yet reactive, boisterous yet conforming. While some depict this era's architecture as "Form Follows Function", others argue that it was really about "Form Follows Finance"! This class looks at the many socio/economic and physical forces that shaped the Twentieth Century, expressing the wants and needs of a society resulting in the forms of our built environment in Europe, North America - and Edmonton! That said, the presenter of this class practiced and studied in Chicago for many years. From Chicago, the entry point to modernism in North America, to the Canadian Prairies, the last place where early modern railway structures such as grain elevators and viaducts were built en masse, all this makes for an intriguing study.

Instructor: Darrel Babuk

Retired architect, Darrel Babuk has been an active contributor to Alberta's heritage. Born to a railway family, Darrel grew up in prairie train stations, led the American Institute of Architecture Students in Washington, DC, and practiced architectural conservation in Chicago while promoting western Canadian heritage to American audiences. As a historian, Darrel Babuk has researched and prepared many reports and presentations about historic early and mid-Twentieth Century buildings. He wrote a regular column in Chicago's *"Metrocommuter News"*, co-produced a mini-series on CBC Radio Edmonton, and has appeared frequently on television, championing the architectural heritage of Western Canada, Chicago and their connections. As a public speaker, Darrel Babuk weaves information into fascinating storylines that captivate audiences.

FINE ARTS AND ART INSTRUCTION

27-A101 Her Way of Seeing: Exploring Six Women Artists Through Pencil, Charcoal and Gouache

TTh 9:00-11:00 am, Jan 12 to Mar 2, 2027 This course is NOT recorded.

Discover the unique ways six remarkable women artists saw and interpreted the world: Mary Cassatt, Berthe Morisot, Georgia O'Keeffe, Emily Carr, Frida Kahlo, and Käthe Kollwitz. Through guided demonstrations and focused artist studies, you will render selected works by each artist, exploring their techniques, artistic choices, and visual language. The course will progress through pencil, charcoal and gouache, to develop skills in observation, proportion, line, form, value, expressive mark-making, colour, shape and layering. As you explore each artist and their work, you will have opportunities to experiment with their approaches and apply what you have learned to new subjects. Your sketchbook will become a record of the experience, filled with artist studies, exercises, colour experiments, expressive marks and developing ideas. No previous experience is required. Come ready to explore, experiment and discover new ways of seeing and making art.

Instructor: Susanne Lamoureux

Susanne Lamoureux has a BA and BEd and has been nominated for an Excellence in Teaching Award. Over the past 10 years she has focused on art and has studied locally and in the USA. She is a recipient of the Staedler, Canada's national drawing contest. Most recently, one of Susanne's drawings was included in the 2014 publication *"Art Journey Portraits and Figures: Best Contemporary Drawing in Graphite, Pastel or Coloured Pencil"*. She is currently teaching at the Artra Art School.

27-A102 From Cathedrals to Courts: Music in Europe during the Renaissance (1400–1600)

TTh 6:00-8:00 pm (6:00-7:00 pm Feb 18 only), Jan 26 to Feb 18, 2027 This course IS recorded.

This course explores the musical world of Renaissance Europe (c. 1400–1600), an age of cathedrals and courts, of humanism and artistic experiment. Through guided listening, discussion and historical context, we will follow how music changed over two

centuries, from the intricate polyphony of Dufay, Ockeghem and Josquin to the expressive madrigals of Monteverdi, and how it prepared the ground for the Baroque. We will look at sacred and secular music, the rise of music printing, the effects of the Reformation and the ties between music, religion, politics and daily life. No prior musical knowledge is required, only curiosity and a willingness to listen. By the end, participants will have a deeper appreciation of one of the most beautiful traditions in Western music.

Instructor: Morteza Abedinifard

Morteza Abedinifard is a musicologist, composer and setar player. He holds a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship at the Schulich School of Music, McGill University, where he studies Iranian musical modernity. His research covers the history and philosophy of music, with particular attention to Persian classical music, and he has presented his work at various national and international conferences. Alongside his scholarly writing, he plays and composes music drawing on Kurdish and Persian traditions.

27-A103 Landscapes in Pastel

MW 9:00-11:00 am, Jan 11 to Mar 3, 2027 This course IS recorded.

Learn to use soft (chalk) pastels by creating Impressionist-like landscapes! Try a variety of different scenes from trees and mountains to rivers and prairie. From blocking in a solid sketch to creating a finished, colourful landscape, you will be introduced to many ways of laying down pastel strokes and using an underpainting to make the colours sing even more. Be inspired by famous historical and contemporary pastellists as you make your own masterpieces.

Instructor: David Shkolny

David Shkolny (BFA, NSCAD 1992), has been painting landscapes for forty years. With twenty-five years of experience teaching, including painting holidays in Italy, he loves to share his experience working in the captivating medium of pastel. David's studio is based in Edmonton and his work can be found in the Canada Council and international collections. David recently placed first and was the people's choice winner in the 2024 annual plein air competition in Red Deer. He also placed first in the Rosebud Art Collective Paint Out in 2024, and the inaugural Canada Paints Plein Air competition in August, 2025.

27-A104 Enchanted Figures: Physical Perfection, Fine Art and Early Modern Science

MW 2:00-3:00 pm, Jan 11 to Mar 3, 2027 This course IS recorded.

In early modern Europe, kings, princes and popes were desperately competing to possess the most beautiful bodies ever sculpted. The most exquisite bodies were not made of bronze or marble, but of wax. Since ancient times, wax was imbued with magic above all other materials, and the power to intimately depict the human condition in physical form. The demand for these uncanny wax bodies was so high that thousands were individually transported across the Alps by donkey and horse carts, to reach the furthest corners of Europe. Not only fine art, these bodies were intended to educate every echelon of society about the emerging scientific study of the human body. We will

explore these artistic triumphs and scientific treasures; the secrets of the artists that created them; the scandals sparked by those that touched them, and the lessons—from laboratory to bed chamber—for which they were created.

Instructor: Kimberly Johnson

Kimberly Johnson is an independent art historian. Originally from southern California, she taught for over ten years at the University of Alberta and later also at NorQuest College. As a published author, invited guest lecturer and conference presenter, she has travelled extensively and enjoys spending hours in her favourite museums all over the world. With an extensive background specialization in cultural studies and the history of art and science, she happily welcomes all questions from traditional art history perspectives to any of the gruesome intersections between artistic and scientific practices.