

Senior Academy

Never stop learning.

Fall Quarter 2026
Course Catalog

Senior
Services 
FOR SOUTH SOUND



southsoundseniors.org/courses • 360.586.6181

Lifelong Learning at Any Age



Welcome to Fall Senior Academy!

I'm excited to share this season's catalog with you and hope you'll find a class (or two!) that catches your eye.

This fall we're offering 12 classes, covering a wide variety of topics. Whether you're someone who loves learning about current events, enjoys getting creative, wants to improve your well-being, or is simply looking for a reason to get out of the house and meet new people, there's something here for you.

One of my favorite things about Senior Academy isn't just the classes—it's the conversations that happen because of them. People come to learn something new, but they also leave having met someone new, shared a few laughs, and discovered interests they didn't know they had. That's what makes this program so special.

I'd also like to thank our wonderful instructors for sharing their time and talents with our community. Their willingness to teach is what makes Senior Academy possible, and we're grateful for everything they bring to the classroom.

Whether you've been taking Senior Academy classes for years or this is your first quarter, I'm so glad you're here. I hope you'll try something new, meet new friends, and enjoy being part of our lifelong learning community.

I look forward to seeing you this fall!

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amanda Mackison". The script is fluid and cursive.

Amanda Mackison
Senior Academy Coordinator

Ready to Join a Class?

There are three ways to register for Senior Academy:



Online

Register online securely at
southsoundseniors.org/courses



By Phone

■ Olympia Senior Center
Call: 360.586.6181
(M-F, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm)



In Person

Visit the Olympia Senior Center at
222 Columbia St NW
Olympia, WA 98501
(M-F, 8:30 am - 4:00 pm)

FEES & REFUNDS



Senior Academy fees are based on the total number of instructional hours. Members receive discounted rates on all Senior Academy classes.

Refund requests must be made before the start of the second day of class.

*MasterCard, Discover, VISA credit/debit cards and checks accepted.

Better Body, Better Mind

Margo Benedetto

In this course we'll begin with a simple study of how the body achieves balance, strength and flexibility, followed by a more extensive exploration of the corresponding mental and emotional traits of balance, strength and flexibility.

In addition to instruction and weekly discussions, each class will incorporate simple movement exercises, mindfulness meditation and informal "micro" practices of mindfulness for daily use.

Beginners and seasoned meditators are welcome!

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 3 - October 8
Thursdays
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$120
Non-Members: \$150

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person



About the Instructor

Margo is a certified mindfulness instructor and veteran classroom teacher in Washington State. A leader in bringing mindfulness education to the Centralia School District, she continues to provide personal and professional development on mindfulness for individuals and groups.

Geopolitics from Globalization to

BRICS: Six Roads of Analysis of the Clash of Civilizations

Bruce Lerro

How do we make sense of wars? Why are some states more stable politically than others? Why are some states wealthier than others? Why haven't we had a world-government up to now? Why are some countries more nationalistic than others? Is immigration a blessing or a curse? How much do major world religions impact global dynamics?

In the last decade the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) have formed an economic bloc to protect themselves against Western style capitalism. More and more countries are trading in local currencies that can threaten the dollar as a world currency. The BRICS countries help each other to be more independent in its political and economic decisions. We will provide answers to all the questions above through the theories we study.



About the Instructor

Bruce has been a night-school college teacher for 27 years. He has taught in alternative college settings, in prisons, and the military, and written eight books—including three on the application of Russian Lev Vygotsky's work on world history.

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 8 - November 10
Tuesdays
2:00 - 4:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$180
Non-Members: \$225

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

Beautiful Lies, Beautiful Truths I

Keith Eisner

For writers and would-be writers of fiction, memoir and essays. Expect to write at least seven pages a week.

Improve your writing through short craft assignments, weekly "Wild Pages," in-class exercises and by critiques of your own work and work of fellow students. You'll also be encouraged to participate in a public reading at the end of the quarter.

Lots of work, lots of fun.

"I write to discover what I know."
— Flannery O'Connor

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 23 - November 9
Wednesdays
2:00 - 4:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$160
Non-Members: \$200

REGISTRATION

In person ONLY

★ \$5 Materials fee

Limited to 10 students
SPACE FILLS QUICKLY!



About the Instructor

A local writer and actor, Keith holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Goddard College. A former spokesperson for Thurston County and The Evergreen State College, Keith likes to write while listening to baseball on the radio. He's honored to have had one of his short stories included in the 2017 O. Henry Award Stories. He also won the 2019 Mighty

River Short Story Contest held by Southeast Missouri University Press, and two of his stories appeared in the Mud Flat Shorts anthology.

The Writing Spa

Anne Hansen

When was the last time you played with LEGOs or fashioned something from Play-Doh?

These exercises will help you generate new material and embed craft skills as you revise and polish your writing. Whether you are beginning to write, or have logged hundreds of hours, these assignments will strengthen your voice and confidence as you write in class and at home.

Gentle feedback from one another will be part of our work. The final meeting is a Celebration Supper.

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 23 - November 4
Wednesdays
2:00 - 4:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$140
Non-Members: \$175

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person



About the Instructor

Anne (Mitchelson) Hansen was an elementary teacher for 37 years with North Thurston Public Schools. Her favorite subject to teach was writing. She was a Teaching Consultant for Puget Sound Writing Project, and founded *Gadget Writing*, a series of workshops for children and adults, designed to reach and teach reluctant writers. Anne

lives in Lacey with her husband David Hansen. She loves books and boats and bicycles, and has several quilts in progress at any given time.

Your Life, Your Story

Pam Toal

Have you ever wanted to write your memoir or leave a legacy for your loved ones? This eight-week course will help you write, share and preserve the life stories only you can tell.

Whether you're a seasoned writer or just starting out, the Guided Autobiography process offers a structured, supportive environment to help you reflect on your life and the events that shaped it.

Each week you'll receive prompts to write two-pages at home on a theme such as family, career, friendship, travel and more. You'll bring your writing the following week to read aloud in class.

Sharing life stories is an ideal way to find new meaning in life and put past events into perspective. No writing experience is necessary, just an openness to appreciate and share the unique life that is yours. Returning students are welcome and will receive an all-new set of themes.



About the Instructor

Pam Toal is a published writer, coach and certified Guided Autobiography facilitator. Her professional background in non-profits, higher education and consulting led her to discover the rewards of writing and sharing life stories.

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 28 - November 16
Mondays
10:00 am - 12:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$160
Non-Members: \$200

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ Limited to 9 students

Out of the Box Creative Thinking

Janis Johnston

Children are not the only ones capable of spontaneity and creativity! What gets in the way of adult creativity? This 6-week adventure will highlight your crystalized intelligence and inspire your creative personality parts.

Creativity is only partially genetic; predominantly, creativity is modeled and learned. Think of a teacher or relative who was creative. What exactly did they do? We will explore aspects of what creativity looks like each week using examples and practice exercises.

Creativity is an aspect of a growth mindset that impacts many areas of our lives. Growth-mindset individuals thrive on challenges, understanding that talent is developed through grit, good strategies and input from others. Grit, defined by psychologist Angela Duckworth, means passion plus perseverance. A creative lifelong learner requires both passion and perseverance. What are you passionate about? Let's explore and find out!



About the Instructor

Janis Johnston earned a counseling psychology doctorate from Boston University. She is retired from roles as a school psychologist, supervising psychologist at a mental health center and private practice family therapist for ages 3 - 83. Her current creative focus is prevention psychology through delivering training and publishing books. She is the author of *Midlife Maze — Recovery and Rediscovery After Loss*; and on retirement, *Transforming Retirement — Rewire and Grow Your Legacy*.

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 29 - November 3
Tuesdays
2:00 - 4:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$120
Non-Members: \$150

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

The Science Behind Why Things Work

Cheryl Haskins

Unlock the fascinating science hiding in your daily routine! This 6-week course explores the chemistry of familiar household phenomena through a relaxed, engaging lens.

Designed for curious minds, each 1-hour session pairs interactive discussion with fun, accessible table-top experiments you can easily do while comfortably seated. We will engage our senses with the unseen each week with experiments such as watching real molecules move, tasting the impact of melting points on chocolate, and making polymers that act both like a liquid and a solid in our hands.

No prior science background needed - just your curiosity!



About the Instructor

Cheryl Haskins earned her PhD from the University of Oklahoma in Chemical Engineering. She went on to a career in Research and Development for the Clorox Company in Oakland, California where she was widely known as an expert in surface science, working with teams to develop and improve Clorox Disinfecting Wipes and other cleaning,

laundry, and food products. She also spent several years teaching high-school and college chemistry as well as high-school physics. Cheryl and her husband live in Olympia and enjoy bird-watching and traveling together. They have four adult children now starting on their own careers. In her spare time, Cheryl enjoys reading, spending time with friends and family, and is currently training for a half marathon.

INFORMATION

WHEN

September 30 - November 4
Wednesdays
10:30 - 11:30 am

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$60
Non-Members: \$75

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

Let's Write a One Act Play

Judith Kiehart

This class invites participants into a lively, collaborative creative process. The group will choose a central theme or plot and work together to shape a full story arc, develop two to five compelling characters, and craft dialogue that brings the narrative to life. Participants will also learn how to incorporate stage directions and make thoughtful decisions about sets, costumes and other production elements.

Each session blends guided instruction with hands-on writing, ensuring everyone contributes meaningfully to the evolving script. Because this is a collective project, weekly homework will help maintain momentum and deepen each writer's engagement. By the final week, the group will present their completed one-act play in a readers-theater performance for a small audience.

Access to Microsoft Word is highly recommended to support drafting and revision throughout the workshop.

INFORMATION

WHEN

October 1 - November 5
Thursdays
1:00 - 3:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$120
Non-Members: \$150

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person



About the Instructor

Judy Kiehart is a published, award-winning author of *Calico Lane* and is frequently invited to give LGBTQ+ talks at senior centers, bookshops, and book clubs. Her staged works—both one-act and full-length plays—have been performed in Colorado and Washington. She has led memoir-writing groups and has coached writers in refining their craft, helping them strengthen voice, structure, and storytelling.

We Were Made for These Times:

Elders and the Restoration of Civic Life

John Rapano, Ph.D.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes' essay "We Were Made for These Times" calls for a mindful response to the outrage many are experiencing over the latest degradations of our civic life and norms. Her prescription is not to lose hope, but rather to have the courage to apply our skills and our lifetime of wisdom and experience to mending the part of the world within our reach.

This essay is an example of grassroots efforts of older adults around the world to restore civic life and norms, to model the principles of elder wisdom, intergenerational stewardship, and to repair and restore our lives, families and communities.

This participation in the stewardship and repair of our civic groups gives us the opportunity to share our lived experiences collectively with the energy and innovation of the generations who follow us as we work toward the restoration of civic life.



About the Instructor

John is retired from teaching Human Development and Family Studies at Pennsylvania State University. He earned a Ph.D. in Administration and Leadership Studies for Nonprofits at Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 2010. John "fully" retired and relocated to Olympia in 2019 but continues to be involved in a variety of volunteer activities.

INFORMATION

WHEN

October 5 - November 9
Mondays
2:00 - 4:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$120
Non-Members: \$150

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

Money: What is it, Anyways?

Tom Womeldorff

Even though money permeates most aspects of our lives, we aren't quite sure what it is. Gold, we would understand. Cash, mostly. But what of transactions involving credit cards? And most recently, what's the deal with cryptocurrency? Is it money?

Basic economic topics will be covered including how the Federal Reserve Bank influences interest rates and the money supply, the US dollar as the default world currency and how money really organizes our worlds — both economic and private.

Students will be invited to set part of the agenda with your own topic interests.

INFORMATION

WHEN

October 8 - November 12
Thursdays
2:00 - 4:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$120
Non-Members: \$150

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person



About the Instructor

Tom Womeldorff is a retired teacher of economics and political economy at The Evergreen State College.

Following Your Intuition

Denise Kinney

Learn how to use your intuition in everyday life. Come as you are - everyone is psychic.

We will explore what intuition is and how it works in your life. Each week we will delve into a new area to explore your gifts. We will share experiences and do weekly exercises. You will discover how to use a variety of tools to understand new ways of knowing yourself and the world within you and outside of you.

Let's have fun!

INFORMATION

WHEN

October 22 - December 3
Thursdays
2:00 - 3:30 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$90
Non-Members: \$112

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

★ No class November 26



About the Instructor

Denise Kinney has been a practicing psychic for 35 years. She has taught intuitive development for decades and uses different tools to enrich and support others on their intuitive journey. She has studied metaphysics, astrology, numerology, healing and is an ordained Spiritualist Minister.

Living Fully Now™

Terry Taylor

Life changes, health, relationships, retirement, family roles, routines and expectations can all look different from what we imagined. Sometimes those changes leave us feeling less connected, less certain, or unsure about what comes next.

Living Fully Now™ is a warm, practical six-week course for those who want to reconnect with their strengths, purpose, relationships and sense of possibility. This is not about ignoring loss or pretending everything is fine. It is about honoring what has mattered, recognizing the wisdom you have gained, and remembering that there may still be more life, meaning, connection, and joy ahead.

Through guided conversation, reflection, simple workbook exercises and small weekly action steps, participants will explore how to feel more hopeful and engaged in daily life; recognize the strengths, wisdom, and resources they still possess; reconnect with people, purpose, curiosity and contribution; see meaningful possibilities for the future; and create a personal next-chapter vision and practical 90-day action plan. Participants work through the guided workbook together during class and may choose to continue with reflection and action activities between sessions.



About the Instructor

Terry Taylor is an organizational psychologist, coach, and facilitator with more than 30 years of experience helping people navigate change, recognize their strengths, make clearer decisions, and create meaningful next chapters.

INFORMATION

WHEN

November 2 - December 7
Mondays
4:00 - 6:00 pm

WHERE

■ Olympia Senior Center

COST

Members: \$210
Non-Members: \$265

REGISTRATION

Online • Phone • In person

Keep Learning Stay Connected

Senior Academy is just one of the many ways **Senior Services for South Sound** helps older adults stay engaged, informed and inspired.

When you become a member, you receive:

- ★ Discounted Senior Academy class rates
- ★ Savings on Trips & Tours
- ★ Access to more activities at the Olympia and Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Centers

Individual Annual Membership: \$72
Individual Lifetime Membership: \$1,200



Join today at
southsoundseniors.org
360.586.6181