

Selim Center

for Lifelong Learning

Learning Post August 2026

A Message from the Director:

Cooler evenings and State Fair plans portend one thing in Minnesota: the slow, graceful transition from summer into fall. At the Selim Center, August represents our most exciting time of year. We not only embark on a new season of programs and highlight some initiatives and developments that have been percolating behind the scenes over the summer, but—most importantly—we look forward to the imminent return of regular interactions with our lifelong learning community.

Our fall programming theme for 2026 is "The Work Unfinished." Taken from Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, the phrase conveys the importance of connecting longstanding traditions to the possibilities of future developments. It is precisely in that space--where connections made in the present live--where we our instructors seek to lend their curiosity, expertise, and conviction to our learners. Our programs feature "unfinished work" in a wide array of disciplines and contexts. We will explore the "work" of building homes (literally, with Libby Starling of the Federal Reserve and conceptually, with Dr. Chris Toner) and infrastructure (with Dr. Rita Lederle), of scientific discovery in the search to understand and combat cancer (with Dr. Alpay Temiz), of coming to terms with historical changes and their legacies (see the series featuring historians Dr. Shaherzad Ahmadi and Dr. Connor Mills), and of finding explanations and alternatives to our political impasses (the faculty of the University of St. Thomas Political Science department and Selim Center favorite Dr. David Schultz). Things "unfinished" will also receive their due, beginning with Dr. Dan Pioske's exploration of the Book of Job and Dr. James Dawes' two-part exploration of the rise (and potential fall) of human rights in human thought and society and including a special contributor appreciation program dedicated to understanding the lives and social experiences of American veterans. Both our new and returning instructors are eager for the chance to spend time learning and thinking together with our lifelong learners this fall!

For those seeking more sustained engagement with a particular subject, our Go to College program enters its fifth decade with a plethora of available course offerings. For an auditor's fee of \$400, students may attend any pre-approved course as often as they choose after consulting with university faculty to determine their desired level of participation. We currently offer more than 50 sections of courses; they range from classical heroes to computer science to conservation practices to Constitutional rights and liberties to the culture of cuisine (and that's just among courses that start with the letter "C"!). See the last page of this newsletter for more details.

Finally, some new initiatives to look for this fall. The Selim Center is developing a series of short podcasts that feature conversations with our current and future instructors. We will also be able to offer the opportunity for Selim Center lifelong learners to attend author events with nationally renowned authors Percival Everett and Arthur Brooks. Both of these initiatives will be highlighted in our newsletters, on our website, and on our Facebook page—please explore and share them with your friends and family!

-Dr. David Williard, Selim Center Director

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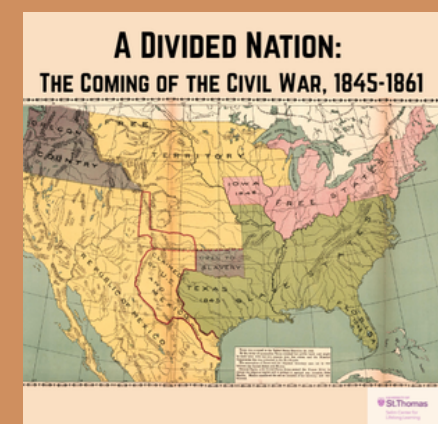
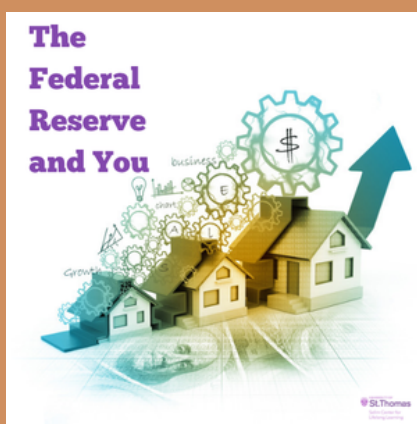
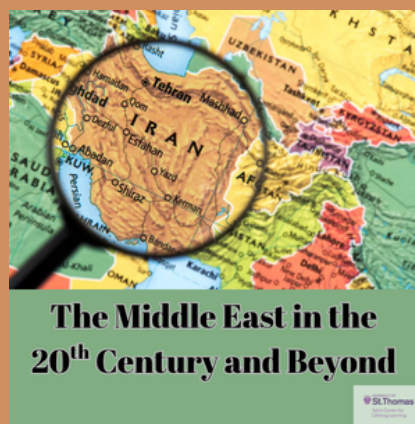


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Fall 2026 Programs!



Single-Session Programs



The Midterms and the Nation

The Midterms and The Nation Lunch & Learn with Professor David Schultz

**Friday, November 6th
12:00pm-1:45pm**

National political analyst and Selim Center regular David Schultz (Distinguished University Professor of Politics and Law, Hamline University) will provide an assessment of the 2026 electoral landscape and its possible meanings. He will discuss national trends, the Minnesota gubernatorial and Congressional results, and the broader context of the nation's political climate and its institutions. Tickets for this event include lunch.

The State of Cancer Research: What We Know and Where We Might Go with Dr. Alpay Temiz

**Wednesday, October 28th
1:00pm-2:45pm**

In this special program, Dr. Alpay Temiz will introduce us to recent breakthroughs in genomics and bioinformatics that have produced substantial progress in identifying genetic markers and gene sequencing in the vast field of cancer research. He will then address how computational algorithms and artificial intelligence may accelerate or even transform cancer research in both genetic modeling and diagnostics and also highlight some of the durable problems within cancer science that remain resistant to breakthroughs.

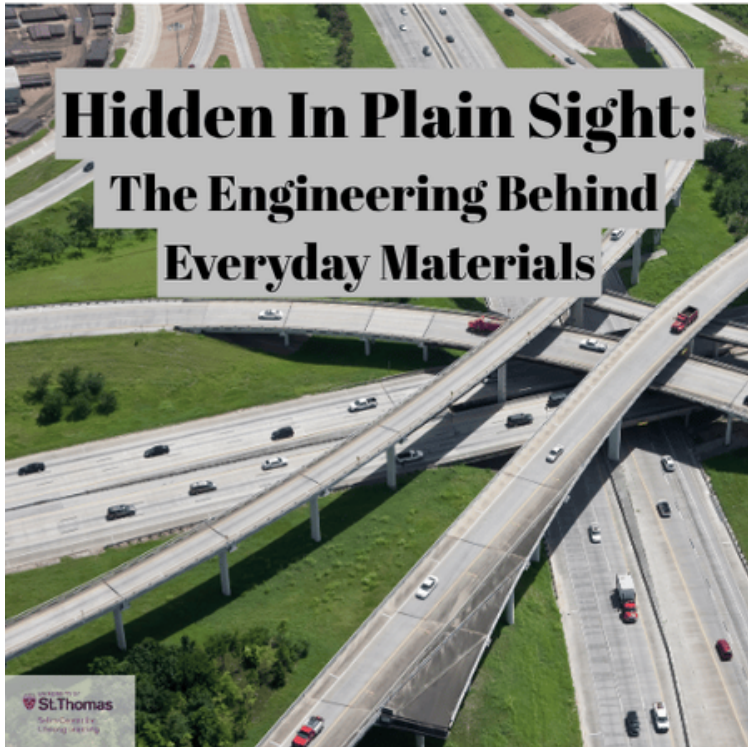
This program is given in honor of Dr. Al Levitan, longtime friend, generous supporter, and lifelong learner at the Selim Center for Lifelong Learning.



The State of Cancer Research

What We Know and Where We Might Go

Single-Session Programs



Hidden in Plain Sight: The Engineering Behind Everyday Materials with Dr. Rita Lederle

Wednesday, October 21

1-2:45pm

Come learn what they are really doing when they close your road and why we can't seem to get rid of potholes!

Veterans in Perspective: A special collaboration between the Selim Center and the Karon Veterans' Resource Center

Wednesday, November 4th

1:00pm-2:45pm

This year's annual supporter appreciation event focuses on veterans and veteranhood in the United States. Developed in partnership with the Karon Family Veterans' Resource Center, our program will feature US military servicemembers from across three generations sharing perspectives on service, citizen-soldierhood, and the relationship of military service to American culture more broadly. While veterans and military service are sometimes stereotyped into singular and often politicized roles, the complexity of their experiences reflects the equally nuanced nature of the citizen-soldier throughout United States history.

As a thank-you to our benefactors, this event is free to all who have made a gift to the Selim Center in the 2026-27 fiscal year. Donations can be mailed to the Selim Center, given in check or cash at the door on the day of the event, or made online via our Tommie Give Day site (website will be shared once it is opened in October).



Multi-Session Programs

Home: An Exploration with Dr. Christopher Toner

September 22, 29, & October 6

1:00-2:45pm

Home is central to our everyday worlds, our literature and legends, and our politics. But what do we mean by "home," and how does home relate to our selves, families, communities, and states? This three part series will begin with a broad exploration of what home has meant to different societies, propose a working model of how we might think of "home" in our modern lives, and discuss the implications for our individual, communal, and political lives that "home" entails in the twenty-first century.



The Federal Reserve and You



The Federal Reserve and You with Libby Starling, Senior Community Development Officer, Minneapolis Federal Reserve

Tuesdays, October 6th & 13th

10:00am-11:45am

What does the Federal Reserve have to do with neighborhood development and home affordability in the Twin Cities? In this special two-lecture program, Libby Starling of the Minneapolis Federal Reserve will explain the structure and function of the Federal Reserve Bank and how the economics of monetary policy affect the real-world questions of neighborhood composition, housing availability, and who gets to own a home in the Twin Cities metro.

Multi-Session Programs



The Middle East in the 20th Century and Beyond

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The Middle East in the 20th Century and Beyond with Professor Shaherzad Ahmadi

Tuesdays, October 13th, 20th & 27th

11:45am-1:15pm

In this series, held over the noon hour to promote intergenerational attendance, Professor Shaherzad Ahmadi (Associate Professor of History, University of St. Thomas) will explain how global currents of economic and political change created the national identities and regional politics of the modern Middle East. This story of revolutionary transformation and conservative resistance challenges many assumptions about how both peoples and states encountered the problems of modernization, Western influences, Cold War tensions, and the relationship of religion to politics and everyday life.

Disputed Elections and Constitutional Crises— Frank Sachs (The Blake School emeritus)

Wednesdays, September 23, 30 & October 7

10am-11:45am

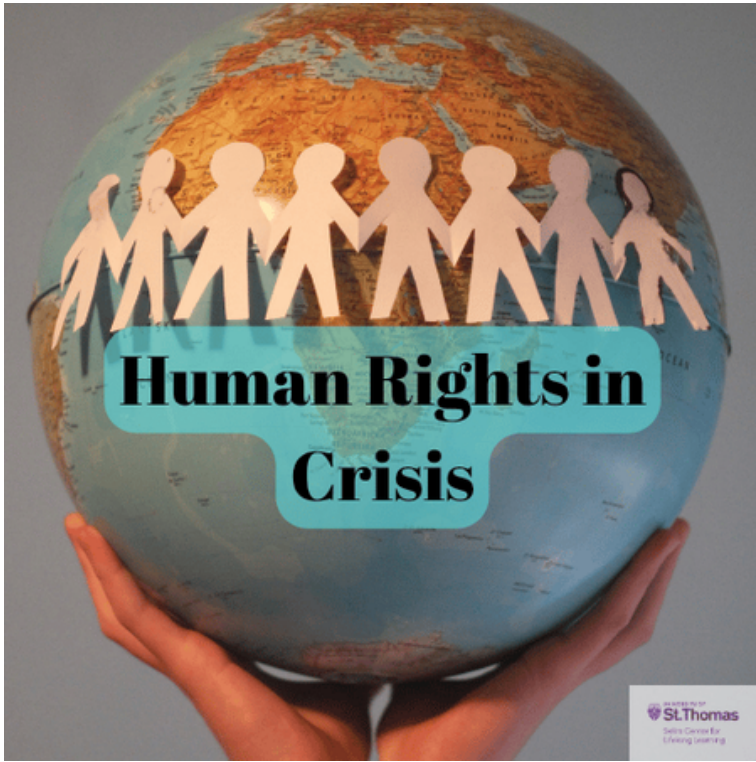
Contrary to our popular perceptions, approximately one in four U.S. presidential elections has seen significant accompanying controversy. Four Presidential elections' results have been disputed, while in two others the nominating process came under great criticism for irregularities. In two more elections, the winner of the popular vote lost the Electoral College vote, and two where the final results could have been heavily disputed but the losing candidate did not protest and in one they did and lost anyway. Frank Sachs, teacher at the Blake School for more than four decades and recipient of the Presidential Scholars Teacher Recognition Award, will discuss why all these elections were disputed, how the disputes were resolved, what was the impact on the presidency, and American history.

Disputed Elections and Constitutional Crises



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Multi-Session Programs



Human Rights In Crisis with Dr. James Dawes
(DeWitt Wallace Distinguished Professor,
Macalester College)

Wednesdays, October 7 & 14
1:00pm-2:45pm

In this two-part series, Professor James Dawes will explore the relationship between human understandings of trauma and rights from ancient Greece to the algorithmic present. How do we remember terrible events without becoming trapped by them? How do we tell stories about suffering that are honest about the past but still leave room for hope? What happens to human rights if we create artificial intelligence systems more intelligent and powerful than we are?

The Book of Job with Professor Daniel Pioske
Thursdays, September 24th, Oct 1 & 8
10:00am-11:45am

In this series, Dan Pioske (Associate Professor and Associate Chair of Theology, University of St. Thomas) explores the Book of Job. Among the most beautiful and challenging books of the Old Testament and one of the greatest literary and theological works of the ancient world, Job raises enduring questions about suffering, justice, faith, and God that have resonated throughout both the Jewish and Christian traditions.



Multi-Session Programs



Polarized Politics: Causes, Attributes, and Responses with Professors Goltz, Lynch & High-Pippert

**Thursdays, September 24, Oct 1 & 8
1:00pm-2:45pm**

Drawing on their combined expertise, this series features three faculty members from the University of St. Thomas political science department who will explore the complex problem of polarized or "frozen" politics in modern American life. The series begins with deep tensions in political philosophy, moves to an assessment of the electoral and communicative mechanisms that select for polemics and punish compromise, and concludes with how both institutions and citizens can find alternatives to totalizing political identities.

World War II in China with Dr. Connor Mills

**October 22, 29 & November 5
10:00-11:45am**

For Americans, the Chinese theater of World War II can too often be regarded as a sideshow to more decisive campaigns. Yet the war in China began earliest (in 1931), lasted longest (14 years), produced among the highest human costs, and involved a bewildering array of belligerents. For Japan, China was the principal objective of imperial ambition, and more than 75% of all Japanese Army personnel deployed during World War II would fight in the Chinese campaigns. Moreover, the war in China yielded consequences of profound significance for the global 20th century and fundamentally influenced the origins and course of the Cold War.

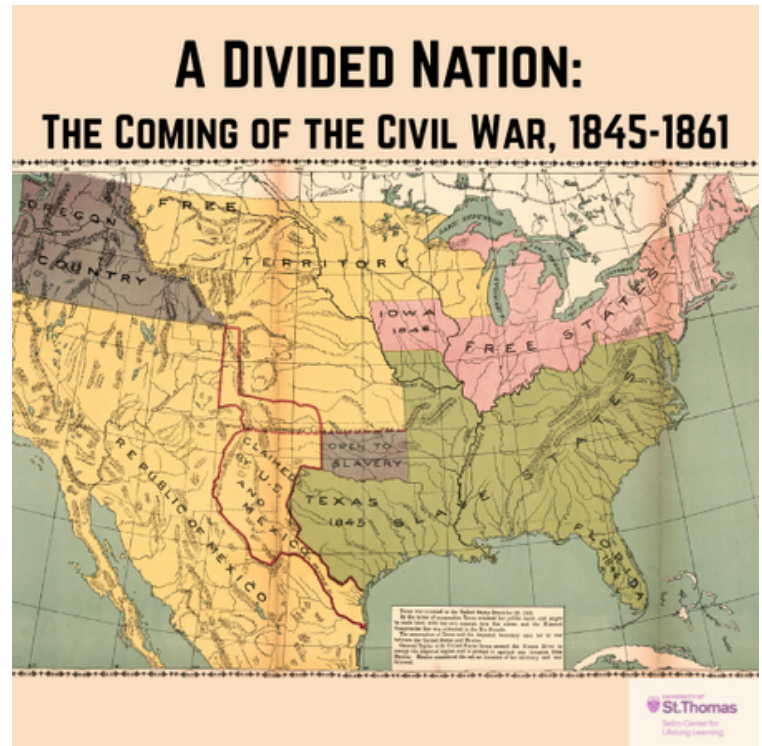


Multi-Session Programs

A Divided Nation: The Coming of the Civil War with Dr. David Williard

**Tuesdays, October 6th & 13th
10:00am-11:45am**

Explaining how an optimistic American public whose economy and borders were relentlessly expanding and whose political tensions seemed to have been effectively suppressed charted a course that ended in the bloodiest and most revolutionary conflict that the United States has ever witnessed poses a challenge for both historians and for public memory. This three-part series will integrate contingent political and institutional developments with explanations stemming from broader cultural and economic conditions, beginning with the invasion of Mexico in 1845 and culminating with the declaration of an insurrection by President Lincoln in April 1861.



All of the above classes are offered both in-person and online via Zoom.

Please make sure you are selecting the format you are planning to attend during the registration process. All in-person programs will take place in the OEC Auditorium, except for the Dr. Schultz Lunch N' Learn (which will be held in Woulfe Hall on the 3rd floor of the Student Center)

To register for any of the above programs, click on the program image to take you to our registration page or visit our website at:

<https://www.stthomas.edu/selim-center/programs>

Impromptu programs may be added as opportunities arise throughout the semester. To stay up-to-date on our programming, consider following us on Facebook. Click here to check out our [Facebook page!](#)

Go to College Program Info

Registration appointments are now being accepted for the Fall 2026 semester. If you are new to the Go-to-College program, you must make an appointment to enroll in person at the Selim Center office. Please contact the Selim Center office for a list of available courses and to make an appointment to register.

Note: not all UST courses are available to audit. Spots will be filled on a first-come basis. Cost to audit a course is \$400 (not including any books, course materials, or parking passes). Fall 2026 courses begin on Wednesday, September 9th.

Priority registration runs from Tuesday, August 25th through Thursday August 27th. Late registrations will be accepted through Friday, September 4th.

If you are interested please send us an email at selimcenter@stthomas.edu

SELIM CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

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