

Selim Center

for Lifelong Learning

Learning Post January/February 2026

Community through Lifelong Learning

The context in which the new year begins in the Twin Cities and its surrounding area have made the meaning of community more evident and more resonant for us. We are profoundly grateful to those of you who make the Selim Center such a vibrant community through your participation and your presence. Both in our upcoming programming and in the cultural events on campus highlighted in this newsletter and on our website, we hope that you find sources of explanation, inspiration, and—above all things—reasons to come and be together with people of all ages and backgrounds in pursuit of lifelong learning

In this newsletter, you will find a preview of our upcoming Spring 2026 programs, a feature on the recent We March for Justice intergenerational study trip, and a look at what else is happening on UST campus that you can take part in.

Please visit the Selim Center's website for the most up-to-date info about our Spring programs, as well as for a list of other events and programs happening at St. Thomas that you can be a part of this semester.

Be on the lookout for Spring program mailer later this month!

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SELIM CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

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Spring 2026 Selim Center Program Highlights

Whatever Punxatawny Phil may say, our Spring offerings resume on March 31st and will run through May 7th. All programs will be offering in-person with the option to attend virtually through an online simulcast. We cannot wait to engage with you and our wonderful array of instructors as we learn together at the Selim Center!

Programs this spring aim to equip Lifelong Learners to satisfy their broadest curiosities, to probe questions of immediate relevance, and to explore their own contexts—from their immediate backyards to global currents. Look for our Registration mailing complete with a full program list in mid-February both in your physical and online mailboxes.

Program highlights include: *(Dates and additional programs coming soon)*

How to Think About Language: What goes into language—from its formal rules to its everyday uses? Instructor Michael Getty will explore this question by delving into the essentials of descriptive linguistics (vs. prescriptive 'grammar'), how to characterize speech sounds, how languages are learned, how to classify them, how they vary and change over time, and ways to think about poetry and song.

Minneapolis: A History of the Mill City: Author and professor Michael Lansing of Augsburg University will guide us through the history of Minneapolis from its pre-founding through the 21st century. We will encounter a city that was both made by the surrounding northern Great Plains and that in turn transformed them, in economic life, culture, and politics.

The Science of Winter Sports: Professor Brett Bruininks of the Department of Exercise Science will offer an in-person series on how all of us, from elite Olympic athletes to ordinary Minnesotans, can not only function but thrive in the coldest climates. He will explore the science of movement, explain what goes into making Olympic champions on the snow and ice, and teach us how we can apply advances in sports science research to our own lives. [Note: this session was originally scheduled for our Winter online series].

**[Read more & register at
www.stthomas.edu/selim-center/programs](http://www.stthomas.edu/selim-center/programs)**



Spring 2026 Selim Center Program Highlights (Continued)



America at 250: Our signature series for this Spring explores the multiple meanings of the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. Instructors from the St. Thomas history department (Jennifer McCutchen, Kari Zimmerman, and David Williard) will combine to offer a series on how the Revolution made--and continues to influence--American identity and institutions, relations with Indigenous communities, and the place of the United States within the Americas and the western hemisphere.

This series will feature a special keynote from Professor Richard Bell of the University of Maryland. Professor Bell will be speaking on the topic of his new book, *The American Revolution and the Fate of the World*, recently published with Penguin Press. Copies of the book will be available as this special session for purchase and signing by the author.

The Trees Around Us: As the temperatures warm and the days lengthen in late April, Maria Dahmus, Director of Sustainability at St. Thomas, and her student leaders will take us on a guided tour of the campus environs and nearby neighborhood to showcase the stunning variety of native trees in the northern Mississippi River valley and explain their function in the watershed's biome. This session will be a hybrid, beginning in OEC Auditorium and then dividing into smaller groups to move through campus and adjacent areas at a gentle pace.

Artificiality and Intelligence: Understanding and Considering AI [Good Society]: Over three sessions, we will encounter the evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and its logics, consider its applications and ethics, and come to understand exactly what this emergent technology might mean for our immediate present and longterm future. The first two sessions in this series will be in the traditional Selim Center instructional format, with the final session dedicated to dialogue and guided discussion.

Math for Society [Tools for Discovery series]: If the word "mathematics" brings to mind the memorization of rote formulas and tables that have always existed and never changed, this series will change your perspective! Instructor Alex Barrios will teach us that math is an idea that evolves and develops--conceived by one generation, extended by the next, and sometimes completed centuries later. In this lecture series, we will trace the moments that reoriented mathematical thought, from the foundational revolution of the early twentieth century to questions occupying researchers today, and we use concrete examples to show how ideas mature over time.

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We March for Justice 2026

Four Selim Center lifelong learners—Mark and Melanie Countryman, Deborah Montgomery, and former director Bob Shoemake—joined St. Thomas faculty and undergraduates for an immersive ten days of travel as participants in the We March for Justice study trip. The group of 19 journeyed to seven different locations across three states as they shared meals, visited museums and historic sites, and met with civil rights veterans and contemporary community leaders.

Along the way, the trip showed how intergenerational learning can build the civic fabric of a community and cultivate meaningful relationships that help people of all ages understand themselves and their world better. One unforgettable and poignant example came at the base of the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma, Alabama, where Deborah Montgomery (pictured) recounted to current undergraduate student leaders how, when she was an undergraduate student, she came south to join thousands of others in marching for the right to vote in March 1965. More than 50 years later, she not only inspired undergraduates to take responsibility for the world that they wished to create, but continues to work for a more vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous community in St. Paul.



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We March for Justice 2026



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Winter 2026 Online Programs

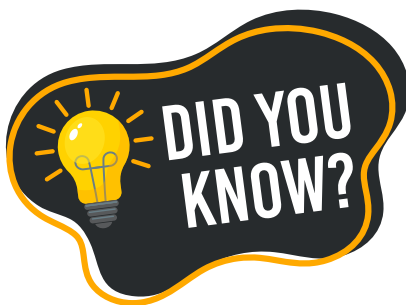
This event will include a series of lectures focused on NATO and the current challenges and crises it faces. Planned modules include: the history, nature, and politics of NATO itself; the essentials of Russia's war in Ukraine and what it means for NATO members; and the ways in which institutions like NATO and others created by the US after World War II allowed the US to achieve its goals and succeed where other hegemonies have failed.



Register Today!
Registration
will be open
through the
10th



With Dr. Renee Buhr
Tuesdays 1:00-2:45pm
February 10, 17, 24



The Selim Center has a Facebook page! If you want to be the first to know about all that is happening here at the Center, make sure to follow us!

Read more & register at
www.stthomas.edu/selim-center/programs

What's Happening at UST?

Check out the Selim Center's website for an updated list of all the ways you can get involved on campus aside from our lifelong learning programs

50 Years of Feminism—A Documentary Project

The Luann Dummer Center for Women invites all Selim Center students and friends to share their reflections on feminism as they have thought and experienced it in their own lives. Interested participants can meet with JoLee Karnz either virtually or in-person, and may (if they choose) be featured on a podcast series produced by the Luann Dummer Center to be shared with the broader community. For more information or to schedule an interview, please contact JoLee Karnz (jolee.karnz@stthomas.edu) or Arianna Wegley (wegl8157@stthomas.edu).

"What You Do Matters: Lessons from Holocaust Perpetrators and Peacekeepers in Rwanda"

Drawing from two case studies developed to educate future military officers about decision-making, Dr. David Frey of the United States Military Academy at West Point will discuss why it is important (particularly for those who are entrusted to use deadly force) to study the Holocaust and other genocides. He will discuss decisions made by German officers serving in occupied Soviet lands in 1941 as well as choices made by Major General Roméo Dallaire, who was Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Rwanda, during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. **February 11, 12:00-1:30pm**
Free and open to Selim students; registration required

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