

# Selim Center

*for Lifelong Learning*  
**Learning Post May 2026**



Lifelong learning is our mission at the Selim Center, and I came to understand that concept with a new appreciation during one of our spring programs. As Professor Alex Barrios was explaining Fermat's Last Theorem during his "Cathedrals of Learning: Math and Society" series, he noted that unlike much of the math that most of us were taught, the theorem has no immediate, direct application to solving life's instrumental problems. It does not help us calculate orbits, assess the load-bearing potential of a structure, or determine the likely rate of return on an investment. Yet for more than 300 years, mathematicians have worked to prove Fermat's Last Theorem and to probe its principles—and in doing so, have unlocked the basis for modern computing, data transfer and security, and the algorithmic networks at the foundation of generative AI. Both the deepest understandings of mathematics as a field and its most important practical impacts have emerged from seeking not the one correct answer but instead an ever-better understanding of the question.

In building our programs and recruiting our instructors, we hope to always pursue an understanding of lifelong learning as self-driven, curious, and capable of changing how we see the world around us. Delving into the deep foundations of math and language; immersing ourselves in the built and natural environments local to us; or pondering how the events that produced a nation are remembered within and beyond that nation's borders over 250 years: all of these series have in common a cohort of passionate learners determined to examine the world in a richer capacity.

As we conclude our spring programs and begin planning for the fall, we invite you to tell us about topics or questions that would make your brain happy. Don't be shy about sending us an email ([selimcenter@stthomas.edu](mailto:selimcenter@stthomas.edu)) or giving us a call (651-962-5188)!

-Dr. David Williard,  
Selim Center Faculty Director

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## Contact Information

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## Last Chance to Register!



Tuesday,  
May 12th  
10-11:45 a.m.  
OEC Auditorium

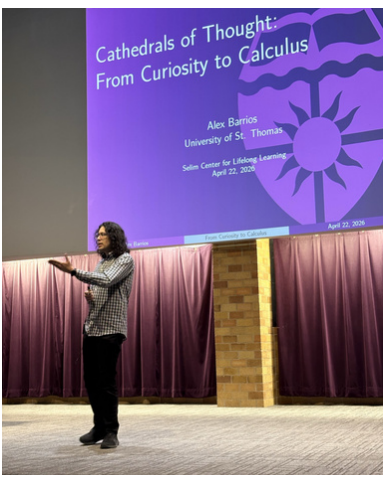
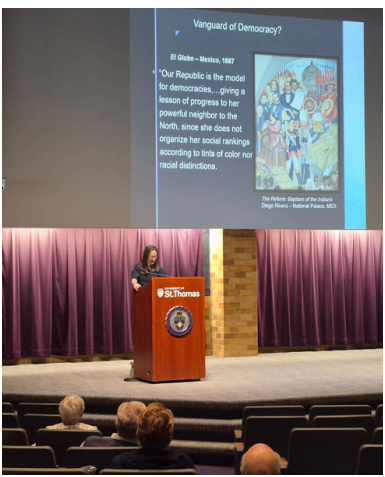
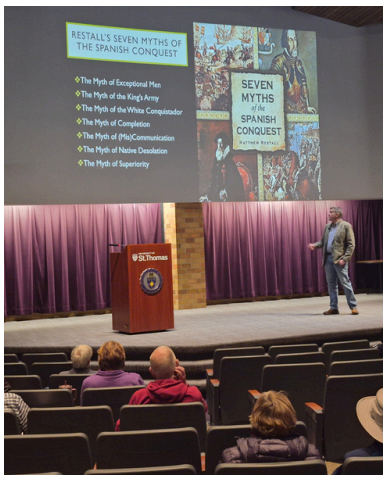


### Program Description:

This session, organized to bring context to the American-Iranian conflict of 2026, begins by examining the unique contribution Shiism has made to Iranian public life since the creation of the Islamic Republic in 1979. Professor Ahmadi will then explore the academic consensus on the revolution's successes and failures, as well as the complex relationship between Iran, its Middle Eastern neighbors, and the United States, with particular emphasis on the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



# Spring 2026 Highlights





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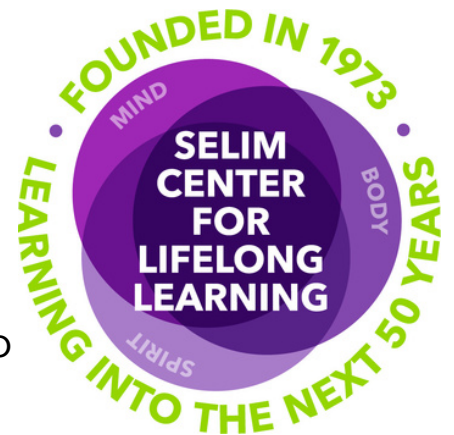
One of the highlights of the Spring was a program led by the Office of Sustainability Initiatives called “The Ecosystem Around Us.” Selim Students were led on a guided tour around campus to learn about the trees and natural history of St. Thomas.



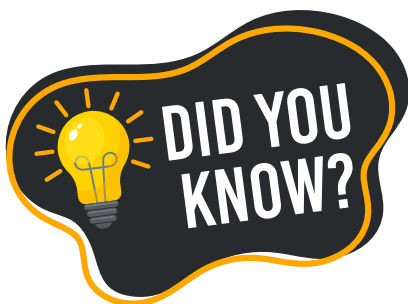


# Thank You for Your Support!

We wanted to say thank you to our community of Selim Center Lifelong Learners for your continued support of our program over the last 50+ years! We truly couldn't do it without you! As we approach the end of our 2026 Spring programming season, here is a reminder of the top three ways you can help support the Selim Center:



1. **Registering for and attending Selim Center programs:** Whether you come to one, some, or all of our programs each semester, you are making a difference just by being a part of our Lifelong Learning programs.
2. **Spreading the word to friends and family:** The best advertising we get is from students like you! Bring a friend, tell a relative, like us on Facebook, etc.!
3. **Making a donation:** Registration fees only cover a portion of our yearly operating costs. Donations from our generous Lifelong Learners are critical to Selim Center programming. You can learn more about how to give by [clicking here to visit our donation site](#).



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!



# 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 in addition to our lifelong learning programs

**What's in the Gallery?** - Have you checked out the Sustainability Arts Gallery (located outside the OEC Auditorium) lately? This rotating gallery is a collaboration of the Office of Sustainability Initiatives and the College of Arts and Sciences Curatorial Team. The Sustainability Arts Gallery is an evolving, living space, continuously activated with new artwork, interdisciplinary research, and interactive activities. Through the integration of research, art, and experiences, this space seeks to inspire us to explore and deepen our understanding of and appreciation for the ecosystems that sustain us and our ability to care for our common home. Now on display: *The Ecology of Seeing*, an exhibit inspired by the UST campus ecosystem and Mississippi River.



## **In Memoriam**

The Selim Center staff and advisory board mourn the passing of longtime advisory board member and Selim Center benefactor Dr. Alexander Levitan. Al and his wife Lucy have been steadfast supporters and friends of lifelong learning at the Selim Center and fundamental to its continuation over more than five decades, and the Center owes much to their guidance and their contributions.

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