

# BRAIN SPARKS!



## IN THIS ISSUE

President's Message

Fall Class Registration

A Peek at Upcoming  
Classes

Study Group Leader  
Spotlight

T-shirts for Fall

Member Spotlight

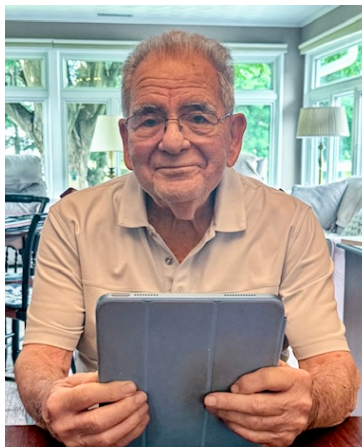
Our New Website

Class Volunteers Needed

New Member Meetup

## From the President's Desk

### WHAT IS AN SRF?



If you have taken an ILR course, you have, undoubtedly, received a follow-up email titled the **Student Response Form** aka **SRF**. The form asks you to respond to questions related to the course. Why and how this form is used by ILR is important to understand.

The form has nine questions which generate valuable feedback for ILR on the topic, presentation, and other aspects of the course as we make future decisions on our offerings. When submitted, the form is sent to our Curriculum Committee for review as well as to the Study Group Leader if they have asked for a summary of the data.

The feedback we receive from you is important and we take pride in knowing we consider our membership's opinions to help us offer quality courses taught by qualified professionals. But in order to do this, we need your input and ask that you take the time to respond to the SRF when you complete your course.

Thank you for your time and support of our work.

Nick Maiorino  
President, ILR

## A NOTE ABOUT REGISTRATION

During the first week of registration, we are again limiting the number of courses you can initially sign up for. This protocol from last semester proved very successful in reducing the waitlists. Therefore, the maximum number of courses you can initially sign up for will be 4. Come back on September 8 to register for additional courses.

## A SNEAK PEEK AT MORE FALL COURSES

- Virtual Tour Down the Nile River
- The Art Y Craft of Memory in Classical Medieval European Cultures
- The Many Faces of Alexander the Great

## Fall Registration Begins Soon

On your mark, get set, hit that “enter” key. **Registration for the Fall semester will begin at 9 a.m. on Tuesday, September 1.** Course descriptions will be available prior to registration on our new website: [ilrnewhaven.org](http://ilrnewhaven.org)

## HERE’S A TASTE OF UPCOMING COURSES

### China & Japan: Their Relationship and Its Historical Context

Mon. Sept. 28, Oct. 5 & Oct. 19

10:30-12:00

Jewish Community Center, Woodbridge

SGL: Mito Mardin

This course focuses on the history of political and cultural exchanges between the #2 and #4 economies of the world in regards to current geopolitical developments.

### Jewish Women Who Changed the World

Tues., Sept. 15

10:30-12:00

Congregation Or Shalom, Orange

SGL: Joyce Saltman

These women made incredible changes in the way we play, look and dress. Many will surprise you!

### James Joyce's Ulysses

Wed. Sept. 30, Oct. 7, 14, 21, 28 & Nov. 4

10:00-11:30

Daniel Sullivan Education Center, Hamden

SGL: James Rhodes

This course provides a basic understanding of Ulysses and identifies its major themes, especially its parallels to Homer's Odyssey and Shakespeare's Hamlet. As the westernmost of all European capitals, Joyce's Dublin is the site where western culture in all its virtues and vices is most conspicuously on display and thus where it is best critiqued.

### The Science of Dreams

Fri. Sept. 18 and 25

10:30-12:00

Jewish Community Center, Woodbridge

SGL: Nick Maiorino

Since Freud helped draw attention to the potential importance of dreams, research has unraveled both the neuroscience and psychology of dreams. But much remains unknown. This course will explore the science behind dreaming, what a dream actually is, why we dream, what REM is, types of dreams, and sleep and dream abnormalities.

## Study Group Leader Spotlight

ERIC DUNSKER



Eric Dunsker came to us via Atlanta in 2006. Having a degree in Human Factors (aka ergonomic, user experience or user-centered design) led him to a career creating or improving products, systems, and services that are easy to learn, easy to use, productive and engaging. He has worked in areas as diverse as cars, air traffic control, store checkout, copiers and postage meters.

Eric has enjoyed living in the New Haven area more than any other place he's lived as an adult and so has stayed for his retirement. As we all know, "retirement" can be a relative term. For 13 years he ran the building committee at a local synagogue, until only a couple of years ago. It was at the synagogue that he met Holly Chepow who regaled him with the activities of ILR. Her enthusiasm convinced him it was a good way to widen his horizons and meet new people.

It was a misunderstanding of the subject of one of the ILR classes that led to the first class Eric would teach. A few years ago, he signed up for a class titled Open Studio. Not being an artist himself, he thought that the class would be similar to the Open Studios at Erector Square (this year October 17-18 at [315 Peck St](#) in New Haven) in which attendees view the work of artists and talk with them about their processes and inspirations. Wrong. The attendees were, in fact, all artists. Making the best of the situation, Eric timidly attempted to sketch a facsimile of the subject matter set up for the session. And he used the class to learn what ILR is about from the group leader, Trish O'Leary.

It was then that the inevitable question was asked. "Is there anything you'd like to teach?" As a joke, Eric offered the subject he thought most antithetical to those in ILR's catalog. "Sure, what about Dungeons and Dragons?" To his surprise, a year later Trish O'Leary asked him to put the class together. He presented a class about the iconic collaborative storytelling fantasy role-playing game last fall. It was a great success.

One of Eric's other interests has led to a class he hopes to give this Fall Semester, comedic music and musical parody. Allen Sherman parodied (Hello Muddah, Hello Faddah), Tom Lehrer (Vatican Rag), Loudon Wainwright III (Dead Skunk, Y2K) and Offspring (Pretty Fly... For a White Guy). These are among his favorites, but by far the unofficial king of parody, "Weird" Al Yankovic, is the G.O.A.T. Eric is working on a course reviewing "Weird Al's forty years of parody hits, including a short history and the original songs and music videos on which his were based.

## SWEATSHIRTS FOR FALL



Fall is coming. Chilly days and cooler nights. Time to bring out the old sweatshirts. But wait! Why not a new one? We now have a unique sweatshirt designed by Eric Dunsker, a member and SGL. It is heather grey with our signature blue logo. It is a medium weight, full cut, runs long and is very comfy. We have size small, medium, large, extra-large, and a few extra-extra-large. We are selling them at cost. This is not a fund raiser. It is an awareness raiser. Come be a walking advertisement for the organization. Help spread the word about us, who we are, and what we offer.

The cost is \$25 each. No additional tax, shipping or handling charge. Free delivery to your door or any other place! To order, please send an email to Debby Kasowitz at [debbyk@snet.net](mailto:debbyk@snet.net). Include your name, address and phone number as well as size and quantity. She will arrange delivery to you. Check or cash only please.

## Member Spotlight

### ROBIN LEWIS



Robin Lewis is a bit of a Renaissance woman. Mathematician, musician, actor, director, ballroom dancer, tech guru are just a few of Robin's talents. If you haven't met Robin Lewis in person, you certainly have felt her presence through her many activities and tasks she performs for ILR.

Robin's degree is in mathematics and she spent more than 30 years utilizing those skills. At Northeast Utilities, Robin worked on economic and load

forecasting, identifying trends in usage that helped determine the need for new power plants.

While she worked at Northeast Utilities, Robin was able to hone her technology skills. With a merger nearing completion, Robin prepared her staff then planned her retirement.

As with many retirees, Robin was concerned about staying active and maintaining her technical skills. Robin joined ILR in 2012. In 2014, Marcia Jamron asked Robin to join the board and became treasurer in 2015. She remained in that position for seven years. In addition to being part of the tech committee, Robin spearheaded the Strategic Planning. It was a monumental task, but she was an organized and efficient leader. Robin said that part of the fun of the Strategic Planning Committee was the people. The strategic plan is in place, and Robin is now on the Board of Directors.

Volunteering with ILR allows Robin to keep her skills fresh. As a tech guru, Robin enjoys problem solving and finding new/creative ways to do things.

Robin believes the strength of ILR is in its curriculum– the wide range of offerings, from games and social experiences to college-level courses. She believes that ILR is a fun way to learn and meet interesting people. As a student of ILR, Robin has expanded her interests to include some art history classes.

Although ILR keeps Robin busy, she still finds time to read (mostly nonfiction), ballroom dance, entertain and travel. Robin and her husband enjoy cruising nationally and internationally. Among her favorite travel spots are Iceland and Norway, both for their varied scenery. Robin is still an active member of her choir and often substitutes as the pianist at church.

Robin's technical skills are certainly assets to ILR. However, Robin's true strengths are in her varied interests, her willingness to help, and her friendly demeanor.

## CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE



We have a brand-new website that you are invited to explore. You can now find us at **ILRNewHaven.org**.

The ILR website up and running again thanks to the fantastic efforts of Alex Donovan and the team at [\(a\)squaredstudio](#), based in Middletown, and our tech committee. We are so excited to showcase this beautifully designed platform and we encourage all IRL members to page through the site.

Here you will find all the information that you need to join ILR, check your membership status, find out more about the programs that we offer, and much, much more. You can also explore the many ways that you can volunteer with ILR and help us make an impact. Be sure to bookmark the home page!

## NEW MEMBER MEETUP



If you've become a member in the past year or so, you're welcome to join us for a cup of coffee and breakfast bites on **Thursday, August 27, 2026 at 10.30am at the Woodbridge Library**. You will hear from our board members and two of the folks featured in our newsletter. We will review the registration process and answer any questions you may have. *RSVP by calling or texting Ann Griffin at 203-530-1065 by Thursday, August 20.*

## Class Volunteers Needed

Pat Maiorino and Rita Esposito, co-chairs of the Volunteer Committee, request your help to make this semester's classes run smoothly and efficiently. Your assistance is needed in two categories, in-person and Zoom courses.

Volunteers for in-person classes, referred to as "liaisons," represent ILR and serve as the conduit between the Study Group Leader (SGL) and the organization. These volunteers are registered members of the class in which they assist and either offer to serve as liaisons or are contacted by a member of the Volunteer Committee to help. They receive written information on responsibilities which include the following: contacting the SGL before the course starts, taking attendance in class and sending the attendance record after the last session, verifying that the classroom and technology have been set up and, finally, sending a thank you note to the SGL at the conclusion of the course. There are often two liaisons assigned to a class who split the tasks. Inexperienced liaisons are paired with an experienced partner.

Volunteers for the Zoom classes, referred to as "hosts" and "cohosts," must have technology experience and receive training in current Zoom protocol from a member of the Volunteer Committee. Because of the skill and technology demands of the class, these volunteers do not pay for the courses in which they assist. They receive written information on responsibilities which include the following: contacting the SGL before the course begins to determine the Zoom specific needs of the instructor, opening and closing the Zoom course, explaining and monitoring things such as closed captioning, recording, and how questions will be handled. Finally, the cohost sends a thank you note to the SGL. First time hosts and/or cohosts will be paired with an experienced volunteer.

Members of the Volunteer Committee provide support to volunteers for all courses.

If you are able to assist in either of these class types, please contact Pat Maiorino at [pgmaiorino@gmail.com](mailto:pgmaiorino@gmail.com) (203-795-3956) or Rita Esposito at [rita@ritaespo.com](mailto:rita@ritaespo.com) (203-687-8966).