Instructors

Steve Barri

For five decades Steve Barri has been a major force in popular music as a songwriter, record producer and music industry executive. He has been closely associated with many of the nation’s major recording artists, among them: Barry McGuire, Three Dog Night, The Grass Roots, The Four Tops, Smokey Robinson, Tommy Roe and Jim Croce. As a prolific lyricist/producer, his charted songs include “Secret Agent Man,” “Eve of Destruction,” and “A Must to Avoid.” He brings to Osher an in-depth knowledge of the music industry having served in senior executive positions with Dunhill, ABC, Warner Bros. and Motown. Steve’s extensive knowledge and experience in the world of entertainment encompasses not only Rock & Roll, but also Broadway and the “Golden Age” of Television and his filled-to-capacity classes are a testimony to the enthusiasm and expertise he happily brings to Osher.

Carlo Coppola

Carlo Coppola has pursued several career paths, sometimes simultaneously. With MA and PhD from the University of Chicago, he has taught South Asian and Middle Eastern studies, literature, and linguistics for decades. Co-founder and co-editor of the Journal of South Asian Literature, he has edited three books and has written a fourth currently at press. Author of many scholarly articles—one of them recently described in a review as “a cerebral delight”—he has organized
and presented papers at numerous national and international scholarly symposia, becoming a major scholar in the field. His translations from South Asian languages, often done collaboratively with the author, number in the hundreds; he has also published ground-breaking interviews with major Indian writers, several of which were read in his OLLI “Short Fiction from South Asia” course.

He has combined his love of literature with his passion for music and food. Former Program Director and an announcer for a major Midwest classical music station, he consults as a foreign-language diction coach for opera singers. An award-winning, diploma-ed chef and food writer, he has taught highly popular classes on food history and wine, integrating visits to restaurants, museums, and wineries into his literature, culture, and food courses. He turned one of his favorite culinary research topics, “What Marco Polo Ate: A Culinary Odyssey,” into an OLLI course with trips to four different restaurants and to LACMA. He hopes to develop this subject into a 9-part TV documentary. “To do that, I was told I need to, first, raise $20M, and second, stop all the fighting in the Middle East!”

Brandon French

Brandon French has been an assistant editor of Modern Teen Magazine, a Pink Pussycat cocktail waitress, an assistant professor of English at Yale University, a published film scholar, a playwright and screenwriter, director of development at Columbia Pictures Television, an award-winning advertising copywriter and creative director, a psychoanalyst in private practice, and a mother. Twenty-seven of her stories have been accepted for publication by literary journals and she was an award winner in the 2015 Chicago Tribune Nelson Algren Fiction Contest.
Ruth Gooley

Ruth Gooley received her Ph.D. in French from UCLA. In her many years at UCLA Extension, she has taught the complete range of courses, including Intensive Second Year Review and French 12, an Introduction to French Literature. She previously taught at USC and Towson University in Maryland.

She offers a class where learning is fun, interactive and connected to real life and to experiences everyone can relate to. She believes in a stress-free learning environment, where students’ language skills are developed according to each individual’s rate of learning and all participation is valued and respected.

Myrna Hant

Myrna A. Hant is a visiting scholar at the Center for the Study of Women at UCLA. Her research focus is popular culture/television with an emphasis on portrayals of mothers and aging in the media. She is the author of articles on mothers/wives and aging on primetime television programs such as *All in the Family*, *The Sopranos*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, *Beulah*, *Good Times*, *The Jeffersons*, *The Parkers*, *My Wife and Kids*, and *Everybody Hates Chris*. Dr. Hant is an instructor in gender studies and life transitions at the UCLA Osher Institute where she teaches a series called Women Who Misbehave as well as ongoing current events courses entitled Understanding Our World. Previous to her work at UCLA she was an administrator at Chapman University. She holds a Masters in English, an MBA and a Ph.D. with an emphasis on aging/gender studies.
Kurt Hohenstein

Kurt Hohenstein has a law degree from the University of Nebraska and a PhD in History from the University of Virginia. He is the author of several books and numerous articles, and the recipient of many awards including the Hughes-Gossett Prize for the best article on the US Supreme Court. He is the lead historian/curator for the Securities and Exchange Commission Historical Society, which can be found at www.sechistorical.org.

He teaches on a variety of historical subjects including legal and political matters, and loves teaching Osher students because of their wide ranging life experiences that teach him as much as he teaches them.

“My students have likened my teaching to an ancient form of torture, but in truth, I’m simply there to force them to challenge their own assumptions, to make them think deeply about their own views. I teach them with questions, to which there are often no easy answers. Together, we battle through difficult material, and fundamental questions about what makes us as Americans, who we are.”

Leonard Koff

Lenny Koff has led the Osher Sunday Salon since 2006 on topics wide and varied: American, English, and European short stories; novels by Dostoevsky, Faulkner, Henry James, Conrad, and Proust, Dante’s Inferno, a course called Taking
Shakespeare to the Movies, and a course that proved particularly engaging psychologically: Myth and Fairy Tales. What he values most are spirited discussions of literary and philosophically topics, which is great and enlightening fun.

Lenny is an Associate of the UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (CMRS) and has degrees from Columbia (B.A. [Woodrow Wilson Fellow], M.A.) and the University of California, Berkeley (M.A., Ph.D.). He has developed and taught courses at UCLA, on campus and online, including Homer and James Joyce, the Literature of Existentialism, Technology and Human Values, and Banned Books, as well as courses in English Literature and in Comparative Literature’s humanities sequence. He received a Distinguished Instructor Award from UCLA Extension (2009) and the 2019 Dean’s Award.

Lenny has lectured in this country and in Europe on such subjects as literature and philosophy, Jews in Plato’s Cave, Targum Sheni (the “Second Targum” of the Book of Esther), Cicero, Freud, and Emmanuel Levinas. He has spoken twice on distance learning at Salahaddin University-Erbil, Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as lectured there on the seventeenth-century Kurdish court poem, Mem û Zîn.

Lenny published Chaucer and the Art of Storytelling (University of California Press) and is co-editor of The Decameron and the Canterbury Tales: New Essays on an Old Question. He is also co-editor of two volumes from Brill (Leiden): Mobs: An Interdisciplinary Inquiry that includes his essay “Elias Canetti and the ‘Biology’ of the Crowd,” and Time: Sense, Space, Structure where my essay “No-Time in Non-Places” appears.

Two of his poems (“For Simon Rodia” and “Three Moments”) were set to music for soprano and piano and performed at the Arnold Schoenberg Institute, USC. A video of “For Simon Rodia,” for soprano, orchestra, and dancers, nominated for an ACE award, was shown at the Barnsdall Park Theatre. He has published two
books of poems—Following a Father’s Death and Quake Wax—and he has several book-length manuscripts which he is preparing to publish.

David Misch

David Misch has been a comic folksinger, stand-up comedian, and screenwriter. He has written, created and/or produced programs for all the major networks and many of the major (and minor) cable outlets, including the multiple-Emmy-nominated Mork and Mindy, the Emmy-losing Duckman, the Emmy-ignored Police Squad!, the Emmy-engorged Saturday Night Live, and the Emmy-ineligible The Muppets Take Manhattan.

David’s play The Boomer Boys has its world premiere at the Secret Rose Theatre in Burbank in February 2016. He wrote Funny: The Book and his writing has been included in May Contain Nuts (Harper-perennial) and Faith: Believers, Agnostics, and Atheists Confront the Big Questions (Simon & Schuster); he also blogs for The Huffington Post.

David’s taught comedy at USC, musical satire at UCLA, and lectured at Oxford University, the Smithsonian Institute, and the University of Sydney (Australia); Yale, 92nd St. Y, New School, Actors Studio, New York Public Library (New York City); KPCC’s Crawford Family Forum (Pasadena), American Film Institute, the Grammy Museum and Second City (Los Angeles); Burbank Comedy Festival; California Women’s Conference, SATE Themed Entertainment, Midwest Popular Culture Association and VIEW Cinema (Torino, Italy) conferences. More at davidmisch.com.