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## **Keep your mind sharp with courses on philosophy, history and more**

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Lawrence Brown

Columnist

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If you picked the mid-point age of Americans today, you'd get a median of 38.8. Our median age on Cape Cod is around 57. What that tells us is that we are significantly older, as a group, than the country as a whole. Our medical care services are certainly skewed to respond to this reality. We have nursing homes, senior centers and Alzheimer's support centers — good ones too.

But what about the life of the mind? Numerous studies are suggesting that in medical terms, our minds operate on a use-it-or-lose-it basis. Learning new things, interacting with new people in challenging discussions, having communities of like-minded folks, all contribute to our mental and emotional health.

Back in the 1970s, my Grandmother Brown was 87, trying to remember the name of someone she'd known long before. Making the connection was important — and she explained why. 'Think,' she said, 'of our minds and memories as a dense jungle laced with thousands of narrow foot-paths. The paths we travel most tend to be broad and well-trodden. But the paths we neglect quickly become overgrown. The older we get, the more rapidly the untrodden paths disappear.'

If we are to remain sharp out here on Cape Cod, then we need opportunities to not only socialize but to challenge ourselves intellectually... to blaze new trails while keeping the old ones open. Fortunately, we have the Academy for Lifelong Learning, located on the campus of our Community College. Their fall catalog is out.

There are courses of almost every description. 15 Challenges of the Future

, is taught by Instructor Tom Murphy. The course is based on his work with Washington's think tank *Millennium Project*, focusing on the environment, global water, population growth, the internet, democracy, economies, health, women, war and peace, education, energy, crime, science and technology and global ethics.

Paul Coteus will be teaching 'Letters from an American,' covering national current events in the context of American history. Russel Leng will be teaching A Political History of Palestine, from 1350 BCE to the present.

The program is strong in history and current events. There's a course on Cape Cod History, The American Revolution: A different perspective,

The Great War: WWI, a course on Native American experiences, and a course on the recent revolutions in science. The Constitution Project invites participants to imagine redrafting the constitution for the 21st century.

There's far more than history. Check out French Cinema: 1970 – today or the History of Rock & Roll. You can find a class on beginning and intermediate French, aging -a philosophy and a changing perspective. A.L.L. offers 6 courses on various aspects of writing poetry, prose, biography and oral storytelling, great literature and essays... bead weaving, cooking, and How best to adapt to an increasingly complex world.

You'll find programs offering things to do: Introductions to chess, square dance, learning to fish, photography using a smartphone, and Beginning Watercolor.

There are courses that directly address the various issues of aging: Topics in Retirement, Beginning Tai Chi, Coping skills for caregivers and Experiencing aging: continuing conversations for women.

In philosophy and religion, find *Albert Camus*

, How philosophy can change your life, Introduction to Nichiren Buddhism and The religions of India.

Fees are reasonable, covering 6 week and 12-week programs. The instructors are volunteers, working for free for the simple enjoyment of it. Got a field of special knowledge? Consider offering a class yourself. Discussions are excellent and it's a perfect setting to make new friends.

If you're age 50 or older, check out their fall 2024 catalog at A.L.L.'s website: [capecodall.org](http://capecodall.org) or phone [774-330-4400](tel:774-330-4400). I just scratched the surface here; there are far more courses than I had space for. Being a kid in school was never this much fun.

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