

Selim Center

for Lifelong Learning
Learning Post April 2026

Spring Learning is in full Swing!

The spring session is underway at the Selim Center! As the culmination of months of scheduling and behind-the-scenes logistics, being together with both familiar returners and new participants on campus offers Luke and me a welcome reward. Our sincere thanks to all who have joined us for our first round of programs--and we look forward to encounters with many more of you over the next several weeks.

In this issue of our Learning Post, you will find a tribute to the Selim Center's second director, Sister Marie Herbert Seiter, who passed away at the end of March. As we reflect on her legacy as part of the more than fifty years of the Selim Center's evolution and persistence, two of our late-emerging sessions provide us with tools to consider community, connection, and grief more deeply.

On April 17th from 11:30am-1:00pm, James Robilotta, a public speaker of international reach and reputation, will guide both Selim Center lifelong learners and members of the St. Thomas undergraduate community in an engaging, interactive intergenerational workshop. We will focus on how human curiosity and thriving communities (whether long-established or newly created ones) can reinforce each other and enrich our everyday humanity in a world that often seems to challenge our willingness and capacity to ask questions and share answers as well as our ability to create and sustain relationships.

On the morning of May 5th, St. Thomas faculty member Melissa Lundquist will explore grief--an emotion all of us have felt, but which we may not consider as a personal and social ritual, cognitive process, and source of meaning and connection.

The passing of a member of the Selim Center's institutional history amid spring's promise of renewal reminds us that lifelong learning is a vital activity: one that is crucial to our personal and societal happiness and well-being at every stage of life and across generations.

-Dr. David Williard
Selim Center Director

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Remembering Sister Marie Herbert Seiter



Former Selim Center Director, Sister Marie Herbert Seiter, passed away on March 19, 2026. The day also marked her own 70th Jubilee, celebrating 70 years of commitment to religious life.

Sr. Marie Herbert began her time at St. Thomas in 1978 as part of the Economics department, where she worked closely with Center founder, Mo Selim. She would eventually take over for Mo as the Center director in 2004, until her retirement in 2009. Her impact can still be felt here at the Selim Center, and her dedication to Lifelong Learning remains at the heart of the Center's mission.



There will be a Memorial Celebration Liturgy held on Friday, April 17, at 11am at Our Lady of the Presentation Chapel (1880 Randolph Ave., St. Paul, MN 55105). The Mass will be followed by lunch in her honor.

-Sr. Marie Herbert pictured with her Selim Center Director predecessor, Dr. Mo Selim, and her successor, Dr. Jan Viktoria.



Newly Added Spring Programs!

HOW CURIOSITY CREATES COMMUNITY



JAMES T.
ROBILOTTA



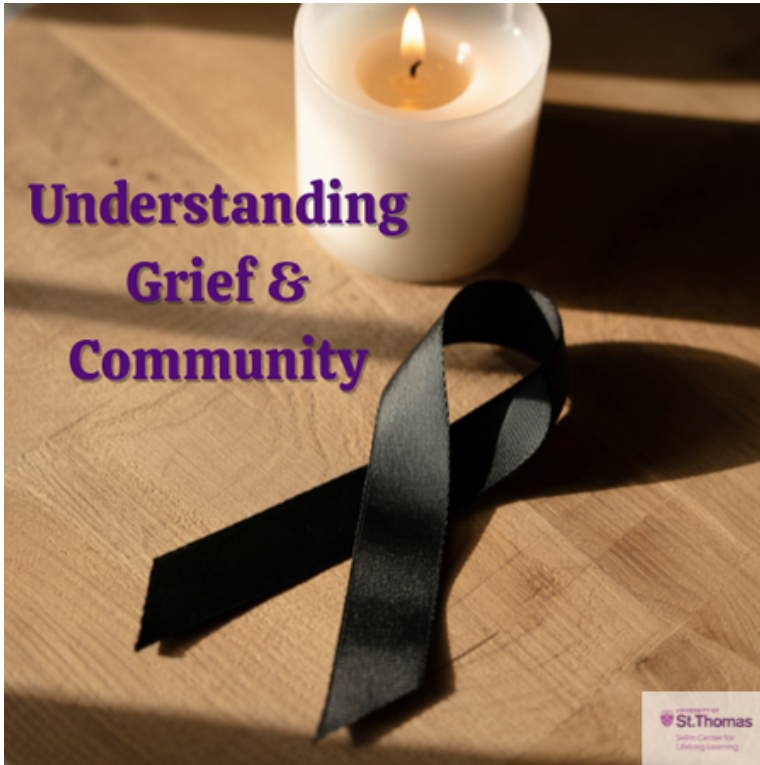
- Friday, April 17th 11:30am-1:00pm
- Iverson Center for Faith LL16C
- Registration Fee: \$25
- [Click here to register](#)
- [Click here](#) for more info about James T Robilotta

Program Description:

What do the problems that Americans most frequently identify in our society have in common? Lack of confidence in institutions, distrust of our neighbors, disempowerment produced by polarized and weaponized politics, and pessimism about the future all disrupt our willingness to be curious and erode our participation in community life—patterns confirmed by studies of people of all ages.

What can we do about it? Internationally renowned author and speaker James T. Robilotta will show us how thinking with curiosity can literally change our brains, letting us be happier, more confident, and more capable of being together at every level of social relationship. James will explain how we as individuals can position ourselves to ask better questions of our friends, neighbors, classmates, and ourselves—and in so doing, to find human meaning, create thicker communities, and lead more fulfilling lives. We will then work together in hands-on activities in partnerships, small groups, and finally larger conversations to put the principles of social curiosity into action.

Newly Added Spring Programs!



- Tuesday, May 5th 10:00am-11:45am
- OEC Auditorium
- Registration Fee: \$25
- [Click here to register](#)
- Instructor: UST Professor Melissa Lundquist

Program Description:

Grief typically appears as an individual, emotional response to loss or disappointment—but understanding grief's role in our personal lives, relationships, and communities involves much more than feelings of isolation. Professor Lundquist will explore how we can understand grief in broader context and learn how processes can generate meaning in life, in family dynamics, and in social institutions.

Speaker Info:

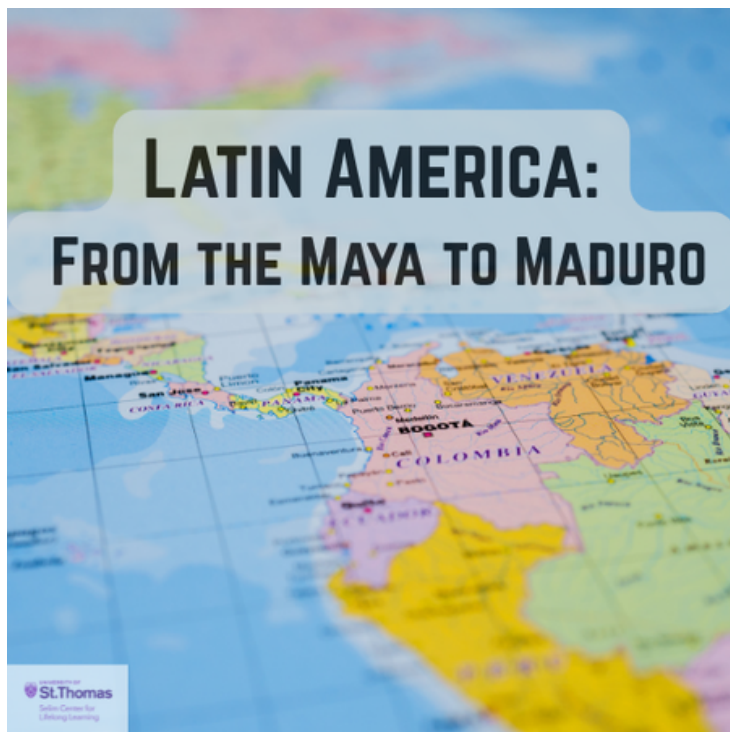
Melissa Lundquist is an Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at St. Thomas. Over the years, Melissa's passion, practice, and scholarship have focused on strengthening families living with cancer. As a social work educator, She strives to combine real-world practice experience with social work knowledge, values, and skills in the classroom to prepare students to practice competence and compassion in any setting.

Spring 2026 Selim Center Programs

The Making of Minneapolis with Dr. Michael Lansing

**Tuesdays, March 31, April 7 & 14,
10:00-11:45 a.m.**

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.



Latin America: From the Maya to Maduro with Dr. Chad McCutchen

Tuesdays, March 31, April 7 & 21, 1:00-2:45 p.m.

Perhaps no region of the globe has seen as much transformation as south and central America. 30,000 years of human habitation and a setting with astounding geographic variation produced cultures of diversity and complexity that have, in turn, encountered competing European imperial projects, depopulation and near-collapse, and the overwhelming majority of humans trafficked in the transAtlantic slave trade. From those ruptures emerged an array of political, economic, and cultural independence projects whose legacies dramatically shape the contemporary world.

Spring 2026 Selim Center Programs



How To Think About Language with Michael Getty

Wednesdays, April 1, 8 & 15, 10:00-11:45 a.m.

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.

The American Revolutionary War with Dr. David Williard

Thursdays, April 2, 9 & 16, 10:00-11:45 a.m.

Part of our America at 250 series. This series will focus on the political and military course and consequences of the War for American Independence. Beginning in 1763 with the aftermath of the first global war for empire and concluding with the political challenges of nationhood after the Treaty of Paris brought the conflict to its end, we will examine both how American colonists made war and, in turn, how the war for independence made them into the United States.

The American Revolutionary War



Spring 2026 Selim Center Programs



The Politics of Music with Dr. Sarah Schmalenberger

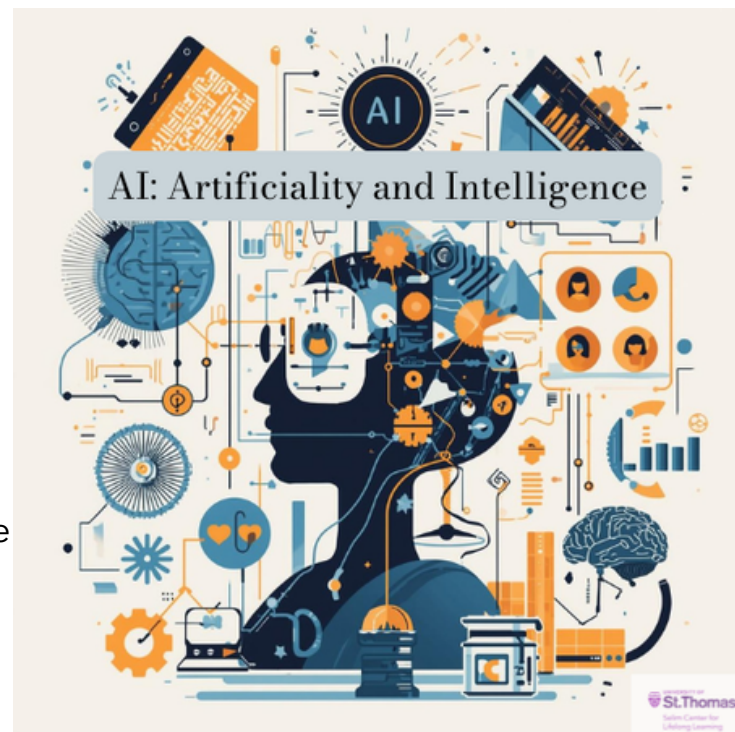
Thursdays, April 2, 9 & 16, 1:00-2:45 p.m.

From ancestral songs of lament to national anthems, music has always reflected political questions--and sometimes transformed them. Join Selim Center veteran instructor Dr. Sarah Schmalenberger to explore some of the continuities and changes in how music has contributed to political movements, from the subtle nationalism of Romantic composers to the more contemporary protest songs of social movements in the late 20th century to the role of musical genres in our own moment and city.

AI: Artificiality and Intelligence with Dr. Peter Distelzweig

Tuesdays, April 14, 28 & May 5, 1:00-2:45 p.m.

Join Dr. Peter Distelzweig (PhD History and Philosophy of Science) for an informative and thought-provoking introduction to the history, nature, and culture-shaping power of Artificial Intelligence. This three-part series is designed to help you think intelligently about Artificial Intelligence and its technological applications. We trace historical developments that led to the current AI explosion, examine important implications of how these new AI technologies are created, and reflect on their potential to contribute to or undermine human flourishing.

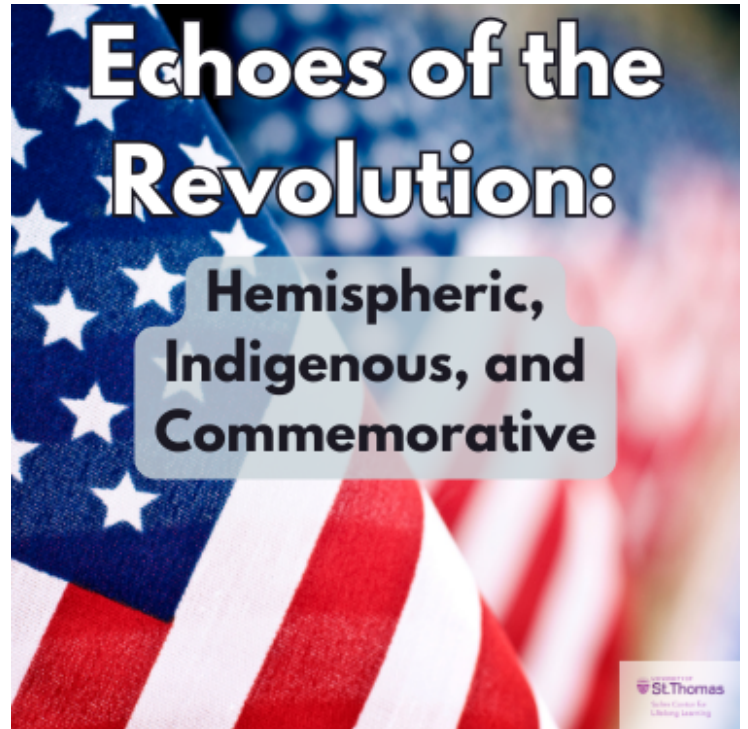


Spring 2026 Selim Center Programs

Echoes of the Revolution: Hemispheric, Indigenous, and Commemorative with Dr. Kari Zimmerman, Dr. Jennifer McCutchen, and Dr. David Williard

Thursdays, April 23, 30 & May 7, 1:00-2:45 p.m.

Part of our America at 250 series. This series looks at the Revolution of 1775-83 from beyond its temporal and spatial borders. Three historians from the University of St. Thomas will offer insights on how the revolution that produced the United States extended throughout the western hemisphere. The American Revolution created the geopolitical and ideological basis for Haitian and Latin American national independence, radically altered life for Indigenous peoples in eastern North America, and developed into a source of competing commemorative traditions that both shaped and reflect American society's deepest questions from the early nineteenth century to the present 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

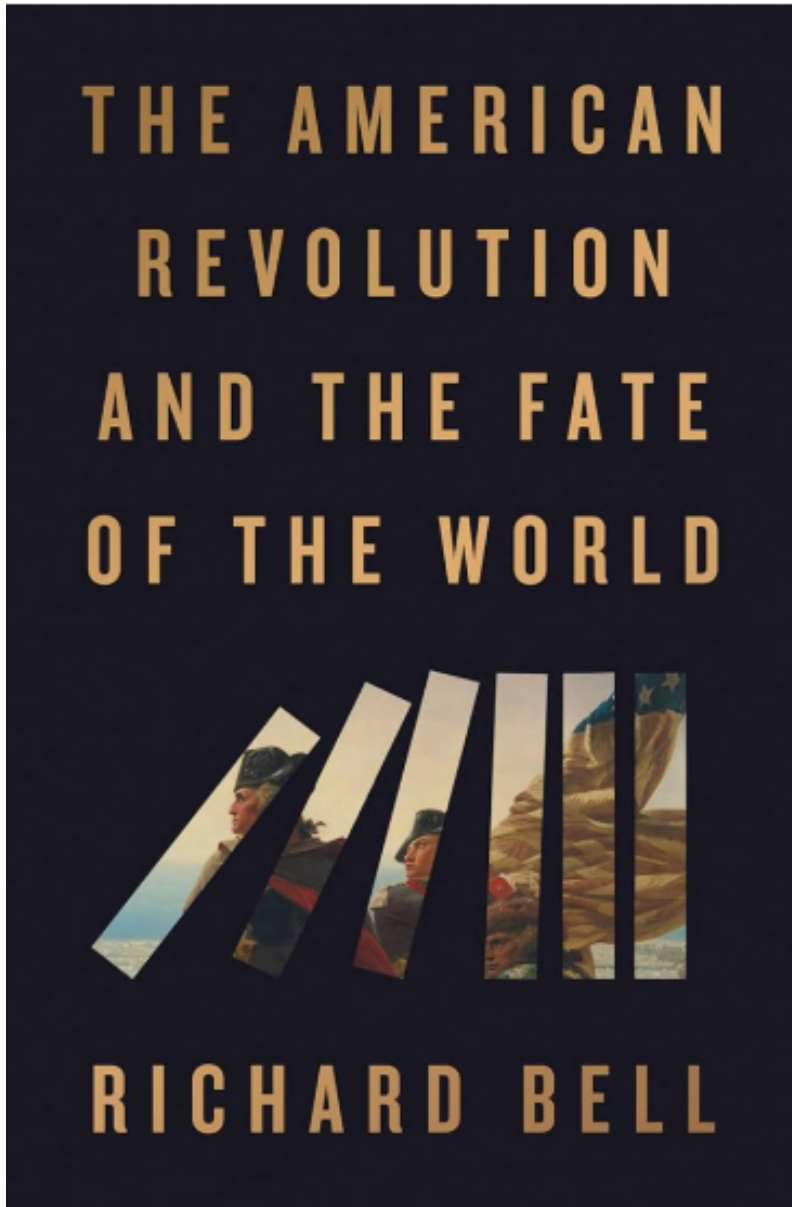


The Ecosystem Around Us with Maria Dahmus,

Thursday April 30, 10:00-11:45 a.m.

As the temperatures warm and the days lengthen in late April, Maria Dahmus, Director of the Office of Sustainability Initiatives (OSI) at St. Thomas, Rachel Schauer, OSI Program Manager, and their Student Sustainability Leaders will guide us through an exploration of the campus ecosystem and the nearby Mississippi River, reflecting on the ecological, community, and personal significance of the area and the watershed. During a guided walk across campus to the Mississippi River, attendees will observe firsthand the interconnected systems that shape our environment, including the rich diversity of native trees and birds and their dynamic relationship with the river. 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.

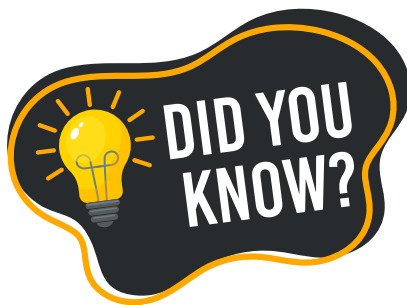
Spring 2026 Selim Center Keynote Event



The American Revolution and the Fate of the World with Dr. Richard Bell

Tuesday April 28, 10:00-11:45 a.m.

This program is the special keynote presentation from our America at 250 series. Professor Bell from the University of Maryland 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 at this special session for purchase and signing by the author. Light refreshments of pastries and coffee are included with your registration fee.



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. A new exhibit is coming soon for April, so be sure to check it out next time you visit St. Thomas!

Transfer of Memory: Holocaust Survivor Stories from Minnesota

Transfer of Memory is a portrait-based exhibition featuring the life stories of Holocaust survivors who made their homes in Minnesota. Through photographs and first-person testimony, the exhibit invites visitors to encounter lived histories of displacement, survival, and resilience—and to reflect on what it means to carry memory forward in a time when firsthand witnesses are disappearing.

March 1 - April 30 in the O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library main floor rotunda - [click here for map](#) Free and open to the public | [Visitor Parking Information](#) | [Click here for Open Hours](#)



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