



Brooklyn Public Library and Prospect Park Alliance Launch Third Semester of Immigrant-Taught University Open Air

*Registration now open for free courses in the sciences and humanities,
taught by scholars from more than 10 countries
in Prospect Park September 16-26*

September 9, 2020 – **Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL) and **Prospect Park Alliance** (PPA) announced today the new semester of classes and the professors from more than 10 countries who will teach the third semester of **University Open Air**, a “pop-up” university taking place September 16 through September 26 at Prospect Park’s Boathouse and surrounding area. The instructors—professors and researchers trained outside of the U.S. who may face obstacles teaching in their respective fields—will offer nearly 40 free courses on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays in sciences, humanities, and other disciplines. A part of BPL’s mission to promote civic literacy and Prospect Park Alliance’s mission to engage the community, **University Open Air** offers a platform for the myriad immigrants in the New York area to share their knowledge with the community.

Lead by a Cameroonian mechanical engineer, Pakistani journalist and a Russian artificial intelligence expert, (full list of professor and courses found below), **University Open Air** will provide courses and workshops that focus on a wide range of topics including masks in contemporary culture, the environment and climate change, urban development, contemporary Taiwanese poetry, photography, and fake news and misinformation.

For a schedule of courses and to register, please visit www.bklynlibrary.org/university-open-air. Courses will be accessible and open to all levels of knowledge. Please check the website for the most current schedule.

“Two years ago, at the inception of UOA no one knew that the poetic idea of teaching outdoors would be a norm by now,” said **László Jakab Orsós**, **BPL’s Vice President of Arts and Culture**. “As we return to the park and continue our partnership with the Prospect Park Alliance for the third semester, I hope that University Open Air can continue to serve as a model for other organizations that are seeking to expand their outdoor programming and find new ways to share experiences and knowledge with their audiences.”

The program will take place at Prospect Park’s Boathouse and surrounding areas, located at 101 East Drive in Brooklyn. In order to ensure the health and safety of all involved, **University Open Air** will utilize social distancing measures and require masks to be worn by all participants. Classes will be limited to 15 participants per session.

"Prospect Park serves many immigrant communities, and we recognize just how important it is to learn from those with different backgrounds," said **Maria Carrasco**, **Vice President of Public Programs at Prospect Park Alliance**. "We aim to provide our community with accessible opportunities to broaden their world, and we thank the Brooklyn Public Library for partnering with us to bring this phenomenal lineup of classes to the park."

Since inception in 2019, BPL and PPA have worked closely with the Library's robust immigration and outreach services team, along with Upwardly Global, Emma's Torch, and World Education Services, to train a diverse range of professorial candidates to participate in the program.

ABOUT THE PROFESSORS AND COURSES

Alon Andorn (Israel) will offer three courses. In *Masks in Contemporary Culture*, Andorn will examine the different connotations facial coverings hold in today's world through a prism of visual culture. In *Modern Mythology of the American Superhero*, students will deconstruct the metaphors behind the pages and discuss how they reflect societal issues of race, gender and geopolitical authority in American history. And, in a third course titled *Mask Making in Nature*, participants will explore different techniques and employ nature to create unique face covers. Andorn holds a Master of Arts in and a bachelor's degree in visual communication. Prior to immigrating to the U.S., Andorn taught art and design in various higher education establishments for over a decade.

Marcelo Arroyave (Colombia) returns to the third semester of UOA to present a course on the history of city shapes, and how different forms have developed from ancient times to the present. Arroyave is a researcher and counselor and has experience in postsecondary and K-12 education, with a focus on economically disadvantaged youth.

Sol Avi Erez (Israel) will offer three photography courses. The first will be a hands-on class that allows students to experiment with photographic processes. In the second, Avi Erez will lead a discussion on portrait photography examining a diverse range of artists and photographers who use the camera lens as a tool to explore identity, and push against boundaries of culture, heritage and gender roles. Erez will also conduct a creative workshop in which participants can use their own camera or phone for learning and where making mistakes and "failing" will be encouraged. Avi Erez holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in art education from HaMidrasha School of Art in Beit-Berl, Israel and a master's in fine arts degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. He is an adjunct professor at the County College of Morris in New-Jersey, and the co-founder of Wick Gallery in Brooklyn, New-York.

Alain Barriere Kamga Noubissi (Cameroon) will use his background in mechanical engineering to lead a course in technical drawing by using basic tools. Noubissi is a mechanical engineer with more than 10 years of experience in maintaining industrial machines and overseeing manufacturing facilities.

Nadia Batool Bokhari (Pakistan) is a journalist focused on social justice. She is also a Health Reporter fellow at CUNY through the Center for Community and Ethnic Media. She will offer courses on the impact of COVID-19 on international students, women's empowerment in Islam, and the Muslim holiday Ashura.

Nadia Bongo (France) will offer four courses on French language, literature, and music, with a focus on representations of beauty and ugliness. Bongo is currently writing a poetry collection. She holds a doctorate degree in French language and literature from Aix Marseille Université and taught in the French Academy for six years.

Chia-lun Chang (Taiwan) returns this semester to offer two classes. The first will focus on contemporary Taiwanese poetry and how students can utilize thematic concepts from these works as a guide to generate new work; the second will explore the theory and work created by artificial intelligence (AI) and how to mimic A.I. to generate new work. In addition to being a published author, Chang has performed at MoMA PS1, Ace hotel, Poetry project, and Queens Museum; and lectured at Pratt institute, Queens College, New York Foundation for the Arts, Tougaloo College and Hanoi University of Business and Technology.

Pavel Ilin (Russia) will lead participants through the incredible journey of artificial intelligence (AI) development and AI mythology, discussing the history of the concept, the difference between human intelligence and artificial intelligence, and analyzing the state of the art of AI and AGI development today. Ilin holds a master's degree in philosophy of culture and was enrolled in a doctorate program before leaving Russia. He is currently a volunteer at Refugee and Immigrants Fund in New York City.

Sinan Kocaslán (Turkey) will offer a photography course that examples it as a form of art therapy as we manage the difficult circumstances related to the pandemic. Kocaslán is a professional photographer with more than 25 years of experience, and is skilled in studio, indoor, and outdoor photography.

Dr. Chok Tenzin Monlam (India). Dr. Chok Tenzin Monlam has spent over 10 years traveling and teaching Tibetan yoga and meditation methods. This semester he will offer four unique courses focused on yoga, Tibetan arts, and guided meditation.

Eugene Opoku-Mensah (Ghana) will offer two courses at this semester of UOA. The first will focus on traditional African ways to boost one's immune system, including the use of natural foods and leaves, and why it is still relevant, even during the pandemic. A second course will focus on resources and opportunities for self-development in the post COVID-19 era. Opoku-Mensah is a computer science educator and researcher with experience working in higher education in both China and Ghana.

Nichola Ramchurjee (India) will offer three courses related to the pandemic, including how COVID-19 will impact the environment and climate change; the challenge of waste management and its' importance in containing the disease; and the impact of the virus on tourism and travel. Ramchurjee has more than 10 years of experience in research, biodiversity and natural resources conservation, remediation and data analytics. She explores social aspects in her environmental work and has published numerous research articles and books.

Stephen L. Tekpetey (Ghana). In two courses, Tekpetey will consider how wood products are produced and used; the impact of the pandemic on wood products and the difference between essential and non-essential wood products. He will also discuss the timber trade, including ongoing efforts by researchers on how to track the origin of commercial timber species to ensure legal trade in 'legal' timber on the international market, as well as enhancing the sustainable management of forest resources worldwide. Tekpetey will also offer a course on how to write an effective research proposal. A research scientist and teaching professional, Tekpetey is a technical committee member on bamboo and rattan standardization for the International Organization for Standardization.

Denise Wiley (Jamaica). Although the term "fake news" is relatively new, Wiley says misinformation has been around for centuries. She will help students find strategies and resources to sift through the abundance of information in our daily lives and find trustworthy sources. She will also lead a course on navigating culture differences and using our similarities to strengthen our communities. Wiley is a journalist, public relations practitioner, and instructor of English as a Second Language. Prior to moving to the US, Ms. Wiley lived in Japan for five years where she taught classes in business English, cultural awareness, and business communication. She holds a bachelor's degree in media and communication.

Brikena Xibinaku (Albania) will lead a course about the intersection between Albania and Italy, including cultural demographic and economic factors. In a second course, she will discuss life in Albania under the Communist regime of Enver Hoxha, a dark period in which freedom of speech was forbidden, religious buildings destroyed, and leaving the country was prohibited. Xibinaku is a translator and professor who has taught Italian language, culture, and literature; she has also worked as an editorial archivist and translator for RTSH (Albanian Radio and Television).

Dr. Ayoub Zareie (Iran). In this course, Dr. Zareie will define different types of misinformation we may face in our daily life through media and social media and the impact of that misinformation in our lives, and how to spot misinformation and address our roles in tackling them. Dr. Zareie is a social scientist who has extensive experience working with policy, research, and planning agencies in Iran and New York.

University Open Air is generously supported by The Morris & Alma Schapiro Fund. WNYC is a media partner of the 2020 BPL Presents Season.

ABOUT BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

[Brooklyn Public Library](#) is one of the nation's largest library systems and among New York City's most democratic institutions. As a leader in developing modern 21st century libraries, we provide resources to support personal advancement, foster civic literacy, and strengthen the fabric of community among the more than 2.7 million individuals who call Brooklyn home. We provide nearly 60,000 free programs a year with writers, thinkers, artists, and educators—from around the corner and around the world. And we give patrons millions of opportunities to enjoy one of life's greatest satisfactions: the joy of a good book.

ABOUT PROSPECT PARK ALLIANCE

Prospect Park Alliance is the non-profit organization that sustains, restores, and advances Prospect Park, Brooklyn's Backyard, in partnership with the City. The Alliance provides critical staff and resources that keep the Park green and vibrant for the diverse communities that call Brooklyn home. Learn more at www.prospectpark.org.

###

Media Contacts

Fritzi Bodenheimer
Brooklyn Public Library
FBodenheimer@bklynlibrary.org
929-276-4232

Lucy Gardner
Prospect Park Alliance
lgardner@prospectpark.org
718-965-8934

Julie Danni / Katrina Reynolds / Josh Balber
Resnicow and Associates
jdanni@resnicow.com / kreynolds@resnicow.com / jbalber@resnicow.com
212-671-5173 / 212-671-5184 / 212-671-5175