THE PARTICIPANT'S HANDBOOK

FIVE COLLEGE LEARNING IN RETIREMENT

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INTRODUCTION

Five College Learning in Retirement (5CLIR) was established to share the pleasures of active learning. To that end, 5CLIR offers a range of programs at the heart of which are seminars and workshops in which each member is an active participant. There is also a wide variety of Special Programs that present opportunities for members to share activities and interests with other members. Although our primary purpose is intellectual pursuit, we recognize and encourage the social rewards of shared learning that entails a "participatory component."

This handbook is divided into three parts:

Part I, directed especially at new members, is an overview of the types of programs 5CLIR offers as well as information on how to register for those programs.

Part II describes what might be expected of you in those programs. 5CLIR seminars and workshops work best when there are no surprises with regard to what participants' roles are in helping the program to achieve its goals and to run as smoothly as possible.

Part III is directed at those members who may be new to public speaking and/or research as well as to those members seeking to improve the quality of their 5CLIR presentations. Depending on your background, you may already be familiar with much, if not all of the information in Part III. It is meant to remove, or at least reduce, some of the mystery surrounding the research and preparation of a 5CLIR presentation.

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PART I: GETTING ENGAGED AND REGISTERED IN 5CLIR PROGRAMS

Participation Opportunities: An Overview

5CLIR offers a wide variety of activities focused on learning. At the heart of these offerings are the peer led seminars and workshops. But, in addition, 5CLIR also offers an extensive number of Special Programs such as: a Book Interest Group; French Conversation; Encore Presentations (a reprise of significant presentations from the prior semester's seminars); Opera Prep (an orientation to Met Opera broadcasts telecast live at Hadley Cinemark); An April Afternoon of Poetry; Salon Music; the Science Roundtable (a discussion group for members interested in current issues in science); the Travel Interest Group (an opportunity for members to share their travel experiences); and Viewpoints (an opportunity for members to discuss current topics proposed by the participants). New programs, developed by 5CLIR members are always encouraged.

In addition, each year 5CLIR generally sponsors a Legislators' Forum in which elected local and state representatives speak to their legislative and policy concerns and answer questions from 5CLIR members.

In association with the Foreign Policy Association, a non-profit dedicated to inspiring the American public to learn more about the world, 5CLIR hosts the Great Decisions Program. This program features lectures given by national authorities, focusing on pressing public policy issues confronting the United States and the world, and is open to all LIR members as well as to the public.

Beyond these opportunities, 5CLIR arranges other programs that may involve a guided visit to a museum, a trip to a live theatrical performance, a walk with a geologist to explore interesting geological features in the area, a multi-day excursion to visit sites in a near-by state, and so on. These Special Programs change from year to year.

> **The 5CLIR Website:** It is strongly recommend that you navigate through the 5CLIR Website, www.5clir.org. There you can find much of the history, documentation, and forms that are discussed below.

Seminars and Workshops

At the heart of the participatory learning opportunities of 5CLIR are the **Seminars and Workshops**. The purpose of a **Seminar** is intellectual learning about a subject though presentations and/or discussions. For example, a seminar on The Lewis & Clark Expedition might have all participants read Stephen Ambrose's book, *Undaunted Courage,* and make a presentation to the class on a topic related to the material in the text,

such as the Sioux Nation. The presenter might then lead a discussion on his/her topic. An example of a different kind of seminar might be one on *Don Quixote*, in which everyone reads the same text, but each week, two participants lead a discussion on a particular section of the text.

Workshops, on the other hand, focus on improving a skill-set. Learning takes place through leader demonstration and hands-on member participation. Workshops can range from artistic endeavors, such as learning how to make collages to learning a new set of computer skills. The list of LIR workshops is quite diverse, and has included food tasting and preparation, the reading of poetry out loud, photography, financial planning, painting and drawing.

For more examples of seminars and workshops, see either the current catalog of programs, or visit the website, 5CLIR.org and click "Programs."

How to Get Engaged

The Preview

For most 5CLIR members, it all begins with the semi-annual Preview of upcoming programs. The Preview is a kind of intellectual bazaar. Most importantly, the Catalog, including all registration materials, is distributed at the Preview. Moderators who will be offering the seminars and workshops featured in the Catalog are present at the Preview and can answer questions you may have, as well as provide additional information on their programs.

The Catalog

Even if you cannot attend the Preview (or joined 5CLIR after it was held), you will either receive a Catalog or you may view it online at 5CLIR.org (click Programs). For each seminar (*note: for the purposes of this Handbook, the use of the word "seminar" will include seminars and workshops*), there is a description of the program and the expected role of participants. Names of the moderators for each seminar, as well as dates, times, and locations are also listed. In addition, the Catalog includes descriptions of Special Programs and other activities to be held throughout the year.

Included in the catalog are registration forms to fill out and mail into 5CLIR. At 5CLIR.org there are also online registration forms (see Resources/Forms on the website).

Registration and Oversubscribed Seminars and Workshops

You are free to register for as many seminars and workshops as your schedule permits. You may register online (under Resources/Forms on the website) or by filling out a paper form, but be aware of the deadline, which is usually about two weeks after the Preview. This deadline is for the "lottery": all people registering for a seminar before the deadline have an equal chance of getting in. If a seminar is oversubscribed, those who registered by the deadline will be entered into a lottery, designed to fairly allocate the available spots. This lottery generally takes place within a week of the registration

deadline. If you register after the deadline, you would not be eligible for the lottery, but you can still register for any seminar that still has open spaces.

Those people who do not get into a seminar of their choosing are placed on a waiting list, and have an opportunity to join the seminar should a place open up.

A full description of the lottery can be found in the Operations Manual, available at 5CLIR.org (under Resources/Documents).

The lottery process does not apply to the Special Programs described above, in which registration is based on a first come, first served basis.

What to Expect After Registration

Shortly after the lottery, you will get a notice of which seminar(s) you were admitted to. Your moderator should soon be sending you an email welcoming you and providing additional information regarding the seminar, typically including such matters as:

- A list of possible presentation topics.
- A bibliography listing useful resource materials.
- A title of a book(s) or article(s) all participants are asked to read.
- A request that you inform the moderator of your preferred topic.
- Other guidelines regarding presentations, e.g. the maximum amount of time allotted per presentation.
- A request to specify any date(s) on which you might be unavailable to present.
- With regard to workshops, suggestions regarding materials to bring to the workshop.
- Other relevant information regarding such matters as parking, the use of audio-visual equipment, etc.

Different moderators approach the matter of topic selection and the scheduling of presentations differently, and it is understood that moderators have considerable discretion in shaping the list of topics and the sequence in which they are to be addressed.

PART II: EXPECTATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS IN A SEMINAR OR WORKSHOP

Guidelines for Constructive Participation in Seminars

Five College Learning in Retirement uses a collaborative approach to learning. Our seminars are "peer led," requiring each participant to take part of the responsibility for the success of the seminar. Often this means making a presentation of some aspect of the seminar's overall topic or leading one of the seminar's discussions. But it also means contributing to constructive discussion. The following are guidelines for doing your part to make the seminar a positive experience for all participants:

- Be well prepared for your presentation, or other contribution;

- Allocate time when giving your presentation for discussion and questions;

- Stay on topic while presenting or during discussion;

- Make arrangements in advance for audiovisual or other equipment and give that equipment a trial run before you present;

- Avoid carrying on conversations during presentations or discussions;

- Turn off your cellphone during class;

- Be brief in your comments; do not to dominate the discussion;

- Disagree with respect for those who hold other points of view;

- Do not solicit funds or circulate petitions for political or other outside groups or causes;

- Avoid advocating for or against particular political candidates, political parties or ballot initiatives.

Helping a Seminar or Workshop to Run Smoothly

Additional rules of 'common courtesy' also include:

- Arriving on time to seminar sessions.
- Attending regularly except for unusual circumstances -- illness, etc.
- Sticking to the time limitations set by the moderator.

Other expectations may not be so obvious, but will contribute to a seminar running smoothly:

Dropping a seminar or workshop: If you must drop a seminar, give the moderator as much notice as possible. The seminar or workshop may have a waiting list, and others may want to take your place. In addition, since the moderator will be busy creating a schedule, the sooner he or she hears that you won't be joining the group, the better.

Absences: Sometimes, absences are unavoidable. However, if, at the outset, you are aware that you must miss two or more sessions of a seminar or workshop, you should check with the moderator before the seminar to determine whether this is acceptable to him or her.

Otherwise, if you need to be absent from a session due to illness, travel, etc., notify the moderator as soon as possible, so that he or she doesn't have to wait for your arrival at the start of the session. This is especially true, of course, if you are on the schedule for that day in which case the moderator would have to make some difficult last-minute decisions.

Topic preference and schedule: If your topic preference for your presentation is not on the moderator's original list of topic options, consult with him or her about it. It is the moderator's job to determine whether your choice fits within the parameters of the seminar. In addition, since the moderator may wish to schedule topics in a particular sequence (such as chronologically, in a history seminar), you should be prepared to work with him or her to determine a mutually agreeable date for your presentation.

Short presentations: Typically, a presentation is about 30-40 minutes, allowing time for discussion. If your presentation much shorter than that, (e.g., 10 minutes of a 30 minute allotment), you should notify the moderator in a timely manner, to discuss possibilities for enhancing your presentation and/or allow him or her to prepare additional material or discussion questions.

Guests: Guests (spouses, family, friends, etc.) are sometimes invited to a single seminar or workshop session. Because some people may be uncomfortable giving a presentation in the presence of a new person in the group, it's always a good idea to ask the moderator if it's OK to bring a guest. The moderator will then clear it with the presenter and let you know (this has rarely been a problem in 5CLIR, but it's always a good idea to check).

Audio visual equipment and operation: If you will be incorporating an audio visual presentation (PowerPoint, videos, etc) as part of your talk, remember that nothing interrupts the flow of a 5CLIR presentation more than AV glitches. It's up to you to make sure you have the right equipment, and that the room you are in can handle it. The moderator can often be helpful in this regard, and you can anticipate that he or she will be asking participants if they may need any assistance. So it's important to check things out beforehand, getting the help and/or equipment you may need. The 5CLIR office owns some AV equipment that you can borrow; to learn what is available and to schedule your use of the equipment, contact the 5CLIR office manager (who may put you in touch with a member of the Tech Committee.)

Name Tags: While moderators often provide a name placard for everyone in the seminar, bringing your nametags is a good idea as well. Nametags are especially useful during informal breaks, or just after the session ends, when the table placards are not necessarily around.

PART III: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF 5CLIR PRESENTATIONS

This section pertains mostly to 5CLIR seminars, rather than workshops, since it is in seminars that participants most frequently make presentations to the group. It was developed in an effort to guide you through some of the issues that have posed difficulty for some 5CLIR members over the years. The suggestions and tips made here should not be taken as a prescription. Creative approaches to presentations that take different approaches are not only welcomed, they are encouraged.

Types of Presentations

Presentations can take a number of different forms. The type of presentation appropriate to a particular seminar is usually prescribed or at least suggested by the moderator, and largely depends on the overall subject matter of the seminar. Here are some examples.

• A typical seminar will focus on a broad topic such as a particular historical era (e.g., the 1920's), an important movement (e.g., the rise of ISIS), or the development or history of a something important to society (e.g., the history of TV).

In these seminars, each participant chooses his or her topic from a list distributed by the moderator, or arranges with the moderator to present on a topic not on the list. Presentations are usually about 30- 40 minutes, often with handouts and/or the use of an audio-visual aid (e.g., PowerPoint). This allows about 15 minutes for discussion, which may be led by either the speaker or the moderator.

• Other seminars focus on a number books that participants read, and each week participants make brief presentations on some aspect of one of the books, and then lead a discussion. An example might be a seminar focusing on novels about aging, in which, during the first hour, a participant might present and lead a discussion on the novel as literature, while in the next hour, another participant discusses the real-life aspects of aging dealt with in the novel.

• Still other seminars may be based even more on discussions rather than presentations. Each week, a participant may be responsible for leading a discussion of a topic relating to the subject of the seminar.

The structure of the seminar is largely dependent on the moderator's overall goals and his or her vision as to how best to achieve those goals. The role of participants will be explained in the description of the seminar in the Preview Catalog, but also may be explained in much more detail at the Preview. However if you are unclear as to what will be expected of you, you should contact the moderator(s) for further explanation.

Some Guidelines for Presentations

Research: A large part of the fun of 5CLIR presentations involves researching and learning about your subject. Research often requires a combination of imaginative sleuthing and everyday common sense.

Resources

The first job of a researcher is to find the appropriate resources you want to use for your research.

The local Public Library is still a good place to start. Also remember that as a member of 5CLIR you may also use any of the academic libraries of the Five Colleges, Amherst, Hampshire, Smith, Mt. Holyoke and UMASS. Most western Massachusetts libraries, including academic libraries, are searchable online, and the inter-library loan system is excellent. Your librarian can be helpful in starting an online account.

If you use your computer for research, you probably know that while anything can be 'googled,' most Google responses offer thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of web pages. So the question of 'where to start' is magnified, because it's up to you to sort through the important, relevant information and distinguish it from the less relevant and often less reliable information.

Conducting a search using a search engine requires thinking creatively about the search terms that you use. You may want to explore the use of *www.googleguide.com*, a guide to how to best use its search engine, as well as *scholar.google.com*, a Google website that allows you to find articles that are often downloadable as pdf files.

> **Developing a bibliography: A special word about Wikipedia.com and online booksellers:** Articles in Wikipedia can be very useful at the start of a research project. They usually offer a broad overview of the subject, including a "fact" list and some commentary. Thus an article can be a very good starting point. To go deeper, check out the reference notes and bibliography in the Wikipedia article, which may suggest other resources.
>
> Another option is to go to the web pages of the big online bookstores, such as Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com. At these sites, a search on your keywords will result in a list of relevant books. For many of the books in the list, you can 'look inside' and see the Table of Contents and Bibliography, and read many of the books' pages. Often, doing this will suggest new ideas, angles and resources for your presentation.

However…

As you do your reading and collect your information, it's also important to remember that your presentation time is limited. So it's always important keep your presentation organized and focused. Some questions you may want to consider include:

- What's the historical context?
- What's 'special' about your subject?
- What about your subject might people NOT already know or be familiar with?
- What's the impact, significance or legacy of your subject?

• What are the controversial and perhaps unanswered questions?

(These types of questions will also be useful in leading a discussion.)

Finally, always consider your moderator as a good source for feedback and direction. He or she is likely to have some familiarity with your particular subject, and can point you to resources as well as assist in focusing your presentation.

By giving your talk a structure such as outlined by the kinds of questions above, you will be well on the way to creating an informative and interesting presentation.

Delivering the Presentation: Tips and Suggestions

For some, public speaking can be scary. But you joined 5CLIR with a belief in its core tenet of active, shared, participatory learning. You've now arrived at the time to share.

We offer here a guide to making the presentation, rather than a prescription. In the final analysis, it will be up to you how you want to present: Reading or speaking; using handouts or not; using technological aids or not, allowing questions while you speak, or preferring to wait until the end. These will be your decisions.

Again, depending on your background, you may find some of the following quite basic, so feel free to use, or ignore, any of the following tips

Speaking: The basics

You've probably heard speakers who don't speak loudly enough, or those who mumble. Remember that when you give a presentation. Use a microphone if necessary—ask your moderator for assistance in obtaining one. Your notes should be organized. Use double-spaced lines to make reading easier, and **BOLD** text to give yourself guidance as to what to emphasize as you read. If hand-written, make sure it's legible. Whether you read your presentation or consult notes, try to make eye contact with your listeners.

Reading or Consulting Notes

Many accomplished speakers, including politicians, scientists, and teachers read their papers. Reading is not in and of itself a poor way to deliver a talk. It's how the talk is read and how well it is written that matters. Reading in monotone, misreading your own words, getting lost on the page—these are things you want to avoid. Your presentation should be well organized. Setting forth the particular topics you will be addressing at the beginning can help you organize your presentation, and can also work as a guide for your audience.

If you use notes rather than read your paper, make sure your notes are legible and organized well enough to guide you through your talk without meandering or getting lost. Again, practice is a good idea here, too.

Practice

One way to improve the delivery of your presentation, regardless of whether you read or consult notes, is to practice at home, and make notes of any parts that give you difficulty. Read it to your spouse or friend and seek feedback. Practice has several benefits. You may discover aspects of your presentation you want to revise. Practice will help to enhance the smoothness of your delivery as well as ensure that your presentation conforms to the time limits set by the moderator(s).

Stopping for questions?

The issue of when you will entertain questions is a personal one. If you think that questions during your talk will hamper your flow of thought, then asking people to hold their questions is perfectly reasonable. You may, however, choose to allow specific clarifying questions during your talk, but ask people to hold more general questions to the end. Or you may not see a problem with any type of question at any time, as long as you are able to keep to your timeframe. You should feel free to discuss your preferences with your moderator, who will also be in a position to limit the questions if they go too far afield.

Using handouts

Handouts can be used for several purposes, such as providing:

- a broad outline of your talk to help people follow along
- a timeline that includes events you will not be addressing specifically
- pictures or photos relevant to your talk
- supplemental material that is relevant but beyond the scope of what you can address given the time frame.

It's important to prepare and use handouts wisely. On the one hand, you want the handouts to aid in people's appreciation of your talk, but at the same time, you don't want your audience reading your handouts while you are speaking. Some experienced 5CLIR presenters recommend that, if possible, handouts be retained until you've concluded your presentation. This would be most applicable to a handout that provides information that supplements your presentation.

Using AV: A Special Note: Computers and other AV equipment can be wonderful aides for your presentations. However, using your equipment in the particular seminar room may prove to be problematic. Be sure to check what equipment (screens, TVs, etc.) and cables the room has and what adapters you may need to hook them up to your own equipment. Adapters are available for VGA (older computers) and HDMI (newer computers) hookups. In addition, some tablets such as the IPad have changed their input requirements. As always, it's a good idea to check out your equipment before your presentation. Your moderator will be helpful in this regard. If your presentation relies on you having access to the web, be sure to determine in advance if wifi is available and what, if any, password is required to link to it.

PowerPoint

In lieu of, or in addition to, handouts, many speakers also choose to use **PowerPoint presentations.**

PowerPoint Presentations (PPP) can be a powerful means of helping listeners follow your talks, and are used by many 5CLIR members in the presentations. That said, you should not feel pressured to use PowerPoint; it is only a tool that you may find useful to illustrate major points of your presentation. *It is not necessarily an appropriate tool for all topics and all presentations.* If you decide PowerPoint would facilitate your presentation, here are some guidelines:

• A PPP should not contain too much text. You want the listener focused on you, not the screen. A bulleted outline can be helpful, but a lot of text written out under each bullet tends to be distracting. For whatever text you do use, make sure you choose a font and font size that is readable from a distance.

• PPP are great for photos, but again, these should be clear and relevant. Avoid using too many photos or ones that are not directly related to your talk.

• Graphs or charts can be quite useful, especially when talking about trends. There are many sources of information about what you might consider in constructing such slides in a PPP. When working with a graph or chart, having a mechanical or laser pointer can be helpful in directing the audience to those aspects of the graph you are addressing.

• A PPP may include slides that are duplicated in handouts, but again, use these judiciously. Constantly ask yourself what do you want your listeners to take with them when they leave.

• While you may work hard to have your PPP include fancy transitions and bright colors, in the end it's the content that counts. Will the content be useful to your listeners, helping them understand the points you are trying to make?

• Embedding videos or audio tracks in a PPP can sometimes be problematic, and depends to some degree on the version of PowerPoint that you have. It's always a good idea to check your PPP in advance of your presentation date. If it doesn't work the way you want it to, seek help from your moderator. If he or she can't help, you may be directed toward a member of the 5CLIR Tech Committee, or another person who can offer assistance.

Other AV

You may have other ideas for the use of AV equipment, such as playing parts of a CD or DVD. It's important to check these out before your presentation, because, as mentioned above, AV glitches can be most distracting. Discussions with your moderator about your AV needs and ideas will be very helpful.

Q and A

The Question-Answer period following your talk is an important part of your overall presentation. You may want to think about preparing discussion questions in advance and distributing them to the group at the end of the presentation. This could be helpful in encouraging discussion.

It's usually helpful to repeat the questions you have been asked so as to be sure everyone has heard the question; if you are unsure of the answer don't be embarrassed to say you don't know the answer – you're not holding yourself out as the world's expert on the topic you presented on. However, such questions may also trigger interesting discussions.