

Guidelines for Catalog Course Descriptions from Instructors

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at George Mason University

In submitting course descriptions and biographical material for the catalog, the Publications Committee asks that descriptions be informative, even enticing as to content, but brief. Biographical information should contain the instructor's current position and title and/or other background material *pertinent to the course described*.

Two types of course description formats are standard. The first is when the instructor is the speaker for the entire course. In general, these course descriptions with bio should not exceed a word count of about 200 (about 28 lines in the catalog) unless absolutely necessary. Here is an example of what we mean, at about 190 words:

Mexico

“Poor Mexico; so far from God, so near to the United States,” are the feelings expressed by a former Mexican president. Historians sum up the mission of the Spanish Conquistadors led by Hernan Cortes as “God, Gold and Glory.” In this course we will survey the factors that influenced the development of today's Mexico. The location, geography and climate of Mexico as a whole and its five different regions will be examined using PowerPoint presentations. Lectures will trace important events in Mexican history and identify important Mexican and Spanish personalities during its classic, colonial and revolutionary history. Topics of current interest will include the makeup of the population, the economy, corruption and tourism; migration, NAFTA and Mexico City; the problems of drought, earthquakes and volcanoes; the Indian revolution in the southern state of Chiapas; and the presidency of Vincente Fox.

(The instructor), an OLLI member, is a retired Army officer and Latin America foreign area specialist. He has lived in Panama and Paraguay and traveled to many South American countries. He was chief of the Latin American Branch, Joint Chiefs of Staff. He has an M.S. in geography and an interest in geopolitical implications of foreign affairs.

The second type of course description is one in which a coordinator leads but has multiple speakers. In this case additional space may be allotted for the list of speakers, dates and topics, including a brief introductory

paragraph. Information about each speaker should include current position and title, and, if needed, a sentence enlarging upon the speaker's topic. An example, modified from a recent catalog, is:

U.S. Immigration Policy

America, proud to be a nation settled by immigrants, has had immigration policies that cover a wide spectrum. This four-week class will take a historical look at our policies and how they have changed since 9/11. We will look at the future of U.S. immigration with input from think tanks whose experts specialize in immigration.

- Oct. 18: History of Immigration from the Colonial Era to the 1070s. Marian Smith, historian, U.S. Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services.
- Oct. 25: History of Interior Enforcement of Immigration Laws, 1891 to the Present: Greg Bednarz, former Deputy Assistant Commissioner, INS Investigations and administrator of immigration function after 9/11. Jackie Bednarz, special assistant, Border and Transportation Security, Department of Homeland Security.
- Nov. 1: Immigration and the U.S.: Past Efforts, Pressing Issues and Problems, Future Policy Prescriptions. Mark Krikorian, Executive Director, Center for Immigration Studies.
- Nov. 8: Past Efforts, Pressing Issues and Problems, Contributions to the Nation and Future Policy Prescriptions. Deborah Meyers, policy analyst, Migration Policy Institute.

If the instructor, coordinator or moderator believes additional information is important to either the description or bio, the additions will be subject to revision/deletion as space requirements dictate. In this case, both description and bio material should be put in journalistic style with the most essential information first.

Three final points as to the relationship and interaction between the originator and the Publications Committee:

The course description and bio will be submitted to the Executive Director or a designated representative within an agreed-upon deadline.

All submissions are subject to revisions for clarity and conformity to the style of the catalog.

The OLLI catalog editors may modify course descriptions for length, consistency and style, and the edited copy will be returned to the instructor only if it has been changed significantly in terms of content. If the editor limits the length of an entry and an instructor wants additional information made available, it can be posted on the website in full with an explanatory note in the catalog entry.