



2015 Spring Schedule – Biltmore Park Classes
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

09/9/15 – Tony Kiss, “Breweries in WNC”

Tony Kiss has been writing about craft beer for the Citizen-Times since 1994 when the area’s first brewery, Highland Brewing Company, released its first ales. Over the past 21 years, he’s watched as craft brewing has grown from a tiny industry with just a handful of workers into a major economic engine with 40-plus breweries and millions of dollars of investment.

He writes beer news daily for the paper and its web site CITIZEN-TIMES.com, does regularly in-depth reporting on beer and writes a weekly Beer Guy column that appears in the Friday Scene culinary and entertainment section. A native of Kingsport, Tenn., he has worked at the Citizen-Times since 1984, most of that time serving as entertainment editor, reporting on music, movies, film and theater, in addition to brewing. But with the brewing world booming in the mountains the newspaper assigned him in 2014 to a full-time beer writing beat. “Some people say I have the best job in town,” he said. “I wouldn’t argue with that.”

09/16/15 – Pam Meister, “Mountain Heritage Day”

Pam became Curator of the Mountain Heritage Center (MHC) in November 2010, where she works with graduate and undergraduate students and is responsible for exhibit development and collections management. In August 2014 she was appointed Interim Director and was thrilled and honored to receive the James R. Short Award for lifetime achievement from SEMC.

Her forty-year career in cultural resource management has also included stints with the National Endowment for the Arts, and as a theatrical costumer, stage manager and general manager of dance and theatre companies in New Orleans, Los Angeles, and Atlanta. A native of New Orleans, she holds a B.A. degree in Theatre (with a minor in History) from the University of New Orleans, and a M.F. A. in Arts Management from the University of Georgia.

09/23/15 - Steve Carlisle, “Creative Academic Entertainment”

Steve is a 1973 graduate of Western Carolina University where he received his degree in Theatre. He went to work 2 days after graduation at an outdoor theatre in Ohio and worked steadily for the next 30 years doing movies, television shows, radio, bus and truck road shows across America, more outdoor dramas, commercials and teaching classes on acting and directing. All this while earning his MFA in Theatre which allowed him to teach on the college level students of the drama. In retirement Steve wrote a one act play about when Carl and Paula Sandburg moved from Michigan to Flat Rock and established their love of North Carolina at their home Connemara. The play “The Sandburgs of Connemara” was produced at the Old Courthouse on Main Street in Hendersonville last year.

09/30/15 – Tom Oren & Susan Fouts, “The Jamaica You Never Knew”

Dr. Fouts and Dr. Oren will share their experience and insights into the Jamaican Educational system, the relationship with Western Carolina University and the community involvement with Jamaican educators. For over 40 years, WCU has been involved in providing education and training programs for Jamaican teachers. This program gives teachers in Jamaica opportunity to receive their Bachelor of Science in Education (BSEd) and Master of Arts in Education (MAEd) degrees.

An Associate Professor in Special Education, Dr. Oren received his PhD at Pennsylvania State University. He travels to Jamaica multiple times each year to teach our Jamaican students. Some believe if Dr. Oren ran for a national office in Jamaica, he would win by a landslide. Dr. Oren coordinates the summer residency for the Jamaican students from the academic side.

Dr. Fouts holds a doctoral degree in adult and community college education from North Carolina State University, where her studies focused on the areas of training and development and lifelong learning. Dr. Fouts coordinates the summer residency for the students from the non-academic activities.

10/7/15 – George Brown, “WCU Students in the Arts”

Associate dean at Western Michigan since 2011, Brown has a 36-year career in the arts, including 21 years in higher education. Prior to his appointment at Western Michigan, Brown served as chair of the Department of Theatre Arts at Bradley University, and he taught and served as head of the directing program at Texas Christian University. He has worked in professional and University Theater for more than 20 years in positions ranging from director to actor to fight choreographer, and has directed more than 100 productions in theaters across the U.S., Caribbean and Europe.

Brown said that he was attracted to the position at WCU by the university’s emphasis on the importance of the arts at a time when budget cuts and other financial woes are taking a toll on arts. “It is exciting to see Western Carolina University actively pursuing a vision of the future that promotes vibrant learning, discovery and community engagement while embracing the arts at its core,” he said. “As an academic leader, educator and artist, I enjoy working, living and creating in this age of dynamic change. I am energized by the possibilities it brings to us as we explore our ‘brave new world.’”

10/14/15 – Bob Buckner, “My Life as a Director of Marching Bands”

Bob Buckner, a graduate of Western Carolina University began his teaching career at Sylva-Webster High School in Sylva, NC. Upon leaving Sylva-Webster, Buckner founded a band design and consulting firm, United Music Enterprises. Bob Buckner served as Director of Athletic Bands at WCU from 1991 until his retirement in 2010. Prior to joining the Western faculty, Buckner also served as Director of Bands at East Tennessee State University from 1987 until 1991. Buckner’s achievements include the 2007 Music Education Advocate Award from the North Carolina Music Educators Association, the Paul A. Reid Distinguished Service Award from Western Carolina University and installation into the Bands of America Hall of Fame.

Currently, Buckner serves a conductor for the “Mountain Winds” Community Band and resides in Waynesville, NC with his wife Donna.

10/21/15 – Leslie Anderson, “Asheville Downtown Development and Revitalization”

Leslie Anderson worked for the City of Asheville for more than 20 years, and in 1986 was named the first director of the City of Asheville Downtown Development Office. In 1995, Leslie started a consulting business to lend her expertise in the areas of nonprofit management, organizational development, strategic planning, community relations and capacity building, urban redevelopment, special events planning, group facilitation, and child advocacy. She holds a BA and a master's degree in public affairs from Western Carolina University. Anderson currently serves on faculty for Western North Carolina Nonprofit Pathways as well as an adjunct instructor for the University Of North Carolina School Of Government.

10/28/15 – The Ammons Sisters, “Mountain Heritage Stories”

Through the art of storytelling, experience tales of real adventures in the fertile forests of North Carolina, and captured with the stokes of a pastel artist, bringing the story alive! While interlacing humorous family stories and rich local legends, Amy’s tales and Doreyl’s art lighten and speak to the heart. The sisters are cofounders of Catch the Spirit of Appalachia, a nonprofit arts and heritage organization. Their mission statement is “Planting seeds of heritage through the arts.”

Amy, the storyteller

Amy grew up in Western North Carolina listening to the stories her grandfather told her. As the eldest of her generation, he impressed upon her to “pass on” the stories of their heritage to the next generation. Amy began writing at age 39 in 1981, completing 8 years of creative writing at Purdue University Calumet, in Hammond, Indiana. Winner of over 30 awards for short stories, personal essays, children's literature, poetry and novels, including four first place awards for "Novel-in-Progress" through Purdue University in Lafayette, Indiana. Amy has now published seven books, with another due out by the end of the year.

Doreyl, the artist

As an artist Doreyl Ammons Cain remains passionate about painting the beauty of nature and creating public murals about our precious Blue Ridge Mountain heritage. Doreyl grew up drawing birds in the sand on the dirt roads around her home. Receiving her first art award in third grade, Doreyl went on to win the South Carolina State Art award for teenagers, a purchase prize and scholarship to Furman University and an art scholarship to the University of South Carolina. Later, in California, while achieving a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a Master of Arts degree in Biological/Medical Art through California State University at Long Beach, she garnered more awards, this time in science as well.

11/4/15 – Todd Witcher, “Discover Life in America” GSMNP Biodiversity Study

Todd P. Witcher is the Executive Director of Discover Life in America (DLIA). DLIA is the non-profit coordinating the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. DLIA works to categorize every living creature in the Smoky Mountains. DLIA-supported scientists have discovered an astonishing 926 species new to science, 7,636 species that were not previously known to exist within the park. The species new to science include 36 moths, 42 spiders, 78 algae, 56 beetles, 26 crustaceans, 58 fungi, 20 bees and bee relatives, 16 tardigrades and 270 bacteria.

11/11/15 – Darin Waters, “African Americans in Western North Carolina”

Dr. Waters is currently a Visiting Assistant Professor of History at the University of North Carolina Asheville. He received his PhD from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. His PhD research focused on the post-Emancipation experiences of African Americans in Western North Carolina. As an accomplished researcher, writer, and speaker, Waters has demonstrated the ability to inspire and engage audiences of all ages on the importance of the role of history and the humanities in our lives. He has been the keynote speaker at MLK observances, and many other events, speaking on topics which involved American history, African American history, Latin American history, education, religion, and community activism. He has appeared on numerous radio programs throughout North Carolina.

11/18/15 – Chris Cooper, “The Speaker of the House”

Chris Cooper is professor and department head in Political Science and Public Affairs and Professor (by courtesy) of Psychology. He is the recipient of the WCU’s highest honors in research (University Scholar) and teaching (Board of Governors Award for Teaching Excellence). He was also named NC Professor of the Year in 2013 by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. His research addressing campaigns and elections, state politics, political psychology, and southern politics has appeared in over 30 journal articles and book chapters. He is also a frequently sought after media source and has been quoted by NPR, the Raleigh News and Observer, Asheville Citizen Times, and many other outlets.

12/2/15 – Michael Reno Harrell – “Stories of the Southern Appalachian Mountains”

Michael Reno Harrell is an award winning songwriter, as well as a veteran storyteller and entertainer, and he’s from the Southern Appalachian Mountains. Michael's recordings top the Americana Music Association charts year after year. His original songs and stories have been described as “Appalachian grit and wit” but, as his writing shows, Michael’s awareness is much broader than the bounds of his boyhood home or even the Southern Experience. Having toured throughout the British Isles and much of Europe, as well as most of the US, the songs he writes and the stories he creates reflect an insight into people’s experiences that catch the ear like an old friend's voice.

Michael's natural knack for storytelling, in print, song and spoken word has earned him praise from not only the music community but from the literary and storytelling worlds as well, having had the honor of being a Featured Teller at the National Storytelling Festival and to be Teller In Residence at the International Storytelling Center, as well as performing at major music events like MerleFest and the Walnut Valley Festival.