

Osher Lifelong Learning Institute

Great Decisions 2024 Class Schedule and Class Facilitators

**From Keith Simmons
Class Leader**

Welcome to the OLLI Great Decisions course for 2024. The course will meet on consecutive Tuesdays beginning on March 19 and continuing through April 23.

The Great Decisions course is different from most of the OLLI courses in that it is not intended to be a lecture. In previous years the class size has been restricted to encourage robust conversation, but recently the class has been over-subscribed meaning that we have turned some people away from registration. This year, we have opened the class, restricted only by the number of Great Decisions course books available to us. The result is a class size of 150. Conversation will be more difficult with a class of this size, but I will still try to conduct the class in a conversational manner. I ask only that everyone be respectful of the desire of others to speak and take care not to dominate conversation.

The course is also different in that you have homework. At the first session of the course, you will receive the 2024 Great Decisions course book published annually by the Foreign Policy Association. The book contains eight chapters, each dealing with a different

foreign policy issue. We will cover five of the eight chapters as more fully discussed below. Each class will deal with a different chapter in the book. I will lead the discussion in each class with the help of a class facilitator for that session. We will have a different class facilitator with us for each class. Each class facilitator is someone with particular expertise in the subject being discussed in that class.

We will not deal with the chapters in the order in which they are presented in the book. The reason for changing the order is to accommodate the schedules of the six class facilitators. Each chapter stands on its own as a discussion topic, so there is no magic to the order in which the chapters are presented in the book. We will not lose anything by taking them out of order.

The 2024 Great Decisions publication does not have a chapter that focuses solely on what might be the preeminent international issue in the past year, the crisis in Israel and the Gaza Strip. The publication does have a chapter titled “The U.S. and the Middle East” that deals with the history of US foreign policy toward the Middle East and the alignment and re-alignment of the nation states in the region. We will take up that chapter in the first week of class. Then, we will come back to the Middle East in the fourth session with Amb. Fletcher Burton focusing on the diplomatic underpinnings of the conflict in Gaza, how it might be resolved, how the Middle East might be reshaped by the conflict, and what might be the consequences of the war. The October 7 attack and the Israeli response have engendered strong feelings and

opinions throughout the world, as well as right here in Nashville. Taking up this topic has its risks, but I want to approach it in a broader diplomatic sense. We will not get into who is right and who is wrong.

Since we will spend two weeks on the Middle East and meet for six weeks, we will not be able to discuss three of the chapters in the publication. The chapters that we will not discuss are the chapters titled Global Trade and Green Energy, Risky Science Across Borders and Invisible Indonesia.

I urge you to read the materials for each class in advance of that class. We may not discuss the materials exactly as presented in the book, so reading the materials and attending class will be the best way to get the full benefit of the course. I also urge you to read the three chapters that we will not discuss in class. Each addresses an issue of vital international importance with broad economic, political and cultural consequences.

It's an election year. People start to think about the issues we will discuss within a partisan context. The course is not intended to promote partisan views. Rather, it is intended to educate on issues of international importance allowing each of us to form more informed opinions. I will try to conduct the course in a manner devoid of partisanship. As you ask your questions and provide your input in the class, I urge you not to express political views.

Set forth below is the order in which we will examine each of the chapters in the book and the class facilitators who will be with us in each class, including a short biographical description of each facilitator.

March 19—The U.S. and the Middle East—Dr. Art Echerd

Dr. Echerd holds a Bachelor's degree in Medieval History with a minor in Early Modern European History, a Masters degree in Medieval English History and a doctorate in history, all from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has taught courses in Western Civilization at UNC Chapel Hill, Campbell University, and Peace College. He has been a history teacher at Harpeth Hall School since 1986, where he has served as a department head and taught Advanced Placement courses in European History, World History, and Comparative Politics, as well as courses in Religions of the World and Contemporary (post-1945) History. He received the Tennessee Humanities Council Outstanding Teacher Award in 1990, and held Harpeth Hall's Hofstead Chair in the Humanities from 1997 to 2000. Over the years he has taught several Winterim for Adults classes relating to the Middle East and the Islamic world, including topics such as Iran, the rise of ISIS, the Kurdish people, Afghanistan, and the Arab Spring.

March 26—Pandemic Preparedness—John A. Morris, Jr., MD

John Morris is Associate Chief of Staff of the Vanderbilt Health System, Chief Medical Officer of the Vanderbilt Health Affiliated Network, Professor of Surgery and Adjunct Professor of Biomedical Informatics at Vanderbilt University

and an Adjunct Professor at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Dr. Morris has a demonstrated interest in the organization and implementation of trauma systems on local, regional and national levels. At Vanderbilt, he has founded or co-founded numerous clinical programs dealing with trauma, including the Level 1 Trauma Center, LifeFlight, Emergency Medicine, Surgical Critical Care, Emergency General Surgery and the Trauma Survivors Network. During the COVID pandemic, as Medical Director of Emergency Operations for the Vanderbilt Health System, he developed the capacity for a mass vaccination program for Middle Tennessee, delivering over 250,000 vaccinations during the height of the pandemic. Dr. Morris received a Bachelor's of Arts degree in English from Trinity College, completed his M.D. and general surgical residency at the University of Kentucky and a trauma and burn fellowship at the University of California at San Francisco.

April 2—Technology Denial and Sino-American Rivalry—Thompson Paine

Thompson Paine leads Product Management and Business Operations for Anthropic, a frontier artificial intelligence lab and product company with safety research and deployment as its core mission. He also is an Adjunct Professor at Vanderbilt Law School, where he teaches a class on Technology, the Law, and US-China Competition. Before Anthropic, Thompson was a strategy and operations leader at Stripe, a global financial technology provider. Before that, he helped build Quizlet from a six-person startup to one of the largest online learning platforms in the U.S. In the policy world, Thompson has served as a Political Analyst with the U.S. State

Department in Beijing and co-authored papers on US-China tech competition. He is a Life Member of the Council on Foreign Relations and proficient in Mandarin Chinese. Thompson has a B.A. in Political Science and Asian Studies from the University of North Carolina, where he was a Morehead-Cain Scholar, and a J.D. and M.B.A. from Stanford University, which included a term of Mandarin language legal coursework at Peking University Law School.

April 9—Diplomatic Approaches in Gaza—Fletcher Burton

Fletcher Burton grew up in Nashville. He is a proud graduate of Pearl High School (not Pearl-Cohn). He was awarded a Bachelor's of Arts degree from Amherst College and a Master of Public Administration from Princeton University. Following college, he was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship for study in Bonn, Germany. He joined the U.S. Foreign Service in 1987 and received his first posting in a divided Berlin during the final days of the Soviet Union when President Reagan came to Berlin and uttered the famous words, "Mr. Gorbachev tear down that wall". Much of his career thereafter was spent abroad in conflict zones, including a posting in Saudi Arabia at the time Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and postings in the Balkans during the wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq. His specialty as a diplomat was the concept and practice of nation building, economic reconstruction and political transformation in the post-conflict phase. In Panjshir Valley, Afghanistan, and in Kirkuk, Iraq, he was head of a U.S. interagency team combining civilian and military members. He served as Consul General in Leipzig, Germany and ended his foreign service career as ambassador and head of an international mission in Sarajevo. He is now retired, living in

Nashville in the home in which he grew up. He spends his time writing various articles and reviews on diplomatic topics with a focus on the triad of war, peace and diplomacy. See, for example: *Diplomacy, the Third Strand of War and Peace* (afsa.org)

April 16—High Seas Treaty—Will Martin

Will Martin is a retired attorney whose career has spanned law practice, business, public service, and leadership roles with environmental NGOs, as well as serving as an adjunct professor of environmental law. His focus in public service and with NGOs has been primarily on ocean issues. During the Clinton-Gore administration, he served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Affairs at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He was active as a U.S. negotiator of an international treaty supplementing the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. He also served a term as chair of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Committee on Fisheries in Rome, and U.S. delegate to international fisheries management treaty organizations that regulate certain high seas fishing activities. He served for thirteen years as a board member, and eight years as chair of the board, of the leading global NGO that sets sustainable fishing standards and uses market forces to promote certified fisheries that meet the standards. For nine years, he served as member of the board of directors of Ocean Conservancy. He has been an adjunct professor of law at Vanderbilt Law School for over twenty years, teaching international environmental law and, currently, water law. He has a Bachelor's of Arts degree from Vanderbilt University and a Juris Doctor degree from Vanderbilt Law School.

April 23—Nato's Future--Brigadier General (Retired) Scott E. Brower

Brigadier General (Retired) Scott E. Brower graduated from the United States Military Academy in 1989 and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Defense Artillery. Following his initial assignment, General Brower served the remainder of his military career in the Army Special Forces community. He commanded at the detachment, company, battalion and group levels, with operational commands culminating with country-wide responsibility for special operations across Iraq in 2010-2011. His combat service includes Desert Storm, the initial invasions of both Afghanistan and Iraq, with three additional tours to Iraq, one to Afghanistan and another deployment to Islamabad, Pakistan. In General Brower's final assignment at Fort Campbell, KY, which culminated 12 years of service at this installation, he served as the Acting Senior Commander for the 101st Airborne Division and Fort Campbell. Following retirement from the US Army, General Brower served as the Military Advisor in Residence at Austin Peay State University, helping to serve over 2,800 Military Affiliated Students. Starting in March of 2020, he served as the Chief of Staff for Governor Lee's Unified Command Group, which was responsible for coordination of all state-level efforts tied to the COVID-19 pandemic response across the state of Tennessee. General Brower now serves as the Director of the Bass Military Scholars Program at Vanderbilt University, which provides scholarships to honorably discharged military service members seeking advanced degrees in Law, Nursing, Medicine, Business, and Education with the charter for the scholars to

connect to the Vanderbilt community and share the values and principles learned in service to our nation.