

FALL 2025

RISE COURSE FACILITATORS

Nancy Baker is a classicist by training and taught classical languages, philosophy, and the history of ideas for most of her professional life. She is a long-time docent at the Currier Museum of Art. She presents regular programming for libraries and community organizations and teaches art history in senior education programs. She is a passionate advocate for the free public library and serves as Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Amherst, NH, public library.

Ralph Barnett attended George Washington University on a basketball scholarship. He had a career in sales, marketing and business consulting. He lives in Salem, NH with his wife Malgosia, daughter Marta, son-in-law Brian, granddaughters Zosia (13), Lilia (10), Anna (9), and Maya (3) and grand pup Teddy (7).

Tom Barry has an MBA from NH College and a BA in English Literature from UMass Boston. He taught Economics at the Vocational Tech, and has worked for Digital Equipment Corporation, Compaq, and HP.

Bob Beck, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, retired to NH with his wife, Meg, in 2020 after a 30+ year career overseas with the United States Government. In retirement, he teaches foreign policy classes for Keene State's CALL program and RISE, speaks frequently across the Monadnock region on the discipline, and writes a monthly column on international relations for the Monadnock Ledger-Transcript and the Brattleboro Reformer. Bob has a BA in Soviet/Eastern European Studies from the University of Maryland and an MA in International Relations from Boston University.

Dominique Boutaud was born in Nice, France. Her life has been oriented toward creativity and helping others. Dominique studied Occupational Therapy in France and has learned new painting and arts techniques throughout her life. She is an abstract artist who has exhibited internationally and has received many awards.

After immigrating to the United States, Dominique took multiple courses and university classes to learn how to teach art to people with memory problems. She became an art facilitator who helps older people to express their creativity. She has taught art and health classes at elementary, middle, high schools, and universities, as well as at art associations in New England. Dominique has three sons.

Martha Brooks, CZT, is a Certified Zentangle Teacher. She finds great joy sharing this fun, relaxing, and easy-to-do art method! Martha is a retired Speech Pathologist who loves family/friend gatherings, rescuing greyhounds and the Coast of Maine.

Judy Brophy has been translating technology into understandable English for over 40 years. After a career as an educational technologist in industry and academia, she currently teaches seniors in area colleges and libraries. In the computer versus human game, she is rooting for the humans.

Gloria Bry has more than 20 years' experience teaching classes with a focus on adult personal growth and development. She earned her BS degree as an adult, with double majors in Psychology/Behavioral Science and Adult Learning/Training and Development. Gloria teaches adults at local YMCAs and school systems. She also presents workshops and seminars for adults.

Paul Carr has a BS and MS from MIT as well as a Ph.D. from Brandeis University. He is an IEEE Life Fellow who led a branch of the Air Force Research Lab that developed the SAW components used in cell phones and radar. He taught philosophy courses at University of Massachusetts Lowell that inspired his book *Beauty in Science and Spirit*. His web page is www.MirrorOfNature.org.

Amy Jo Cielinski is a certified Yoga Teacher who trained in the shakti flow tradition of at OM Yoga in Concord, NH and Bethel Farm Yoga in Hillsborough, NH. She has received additional training through the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, yoga for hip/knee replacements, and yoga for osteoporosis. Amy has a BS in Math and Physics from Wagner College and an MS in Physics, with a concentration in Optics from Stevens Institute of Technology.

Michael Conley, Ed.D. has been a special education teacher for many years. Along the way he has studied Eastern religions, meditation techniques and the Enneagram. Over the past few years he has taught RISE courses on James Joyce, the Romantics and the Hippies, and the Enneagram.

Dr. Diane Connell taught full time at Rivier University in the Division of Education & Counseling from 1996-2019. She now teaches at Rivier as an Adjunct Professor Emeritus and in Rivier's RISE Program. Her professional background includes Special Education, Psychology, Education, and Neuropsychology. Prior to teaching at Rivier, she was a teacher for students identified with Special Needs. She is married and has two grown children; she enjoys working out at the gym; yoga, meditation, and walking.

Marie Connolly attended Rivier University as an adult evening student and graduated 1995. After graduating, she worked in human resources for technology companies. Marie has a curious mind and loves to learn, which is why RISE is perfect for her.

Susan Deschenes was the RISE Coordinator for two years. She had a long career as a public librarian in New Hampshire and often chose films for libraries' collections. Susan developed her love of film at the University of Rochester, where she volunteered in the Film Studies Center during her undergraduate years.

Carol Eyman is the former programming and marketing librarian at the Nashua Public Library.

Michael Ferris has worked in the financial services industry since 2006 and joined Edward Jones in 2022. At Edward Jones, he strives to make sure his clients feel heard and that he understands their unique stories. Outside of work, family is everything to Mike. His wife Kelly is a first-grade teacher; her selflessness and passion for education is contagious. They have two small children, a 7-year-old boy and a 4-year-old girl who keep them very busy.

Tess George is a retired adjunct professor. She taught Public Speaking, Communication, and Critical Thinking at several colleges, including Penn State and UMass Lowell. At UMass, she negotiated two contracts for the adjunct faculty union. She is an avid gardener, and enjoys painting, reading, and hanging out with her husband, her cat, and her friends.

Joan Gibson taught in public and private schools for fifty years, retired from Nashua High, and went on to teach ESOL (English as a Second or Other Language) at the Adult Learning Center. Living life is her focus; enjoying people is the process.

Don Gnecco is a retired career educator who worked in both Maine and New Hampshire. He is an award-winning songwriter and church musician. Don developed an interest in songwriting in his forties, when his kids were nearly grown, providing more time to pursue creative interests. Over the years, he has worked with talented vocalists and has produced seven albums (including two Christmas albums) of original inspirational and uplifting songs. The most recent album, "We Raise Our Voices" was released on May 7th, 2025. (Listen free at www.DonGnecco.com.)

Peter Henriques spent 40 years working and living internationally. He has held senior corporate roles in Australasia, Latin America, Asia, and the United Kingdom, including Board positions in India, Australia, New Zealand, Vietnam, and China. From 2012 - 2020, Peter led joint ventures with Government State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) in Vietnam and China. Peter has a BA in History from Syracuse University and an MA in International Affairs from Columbia University.

Robert Hoffman is a professional musician, speaker, and writer on music with eclectic tastes and diverse experience. He has been a RISE facilitator for several years and in the last decade has taught at least 60 different courses. He has given courses to adults as a faculty member at Manchester Community Music School and pre-concert talks at libraries in Nashua and in Portsmouth and environs. Recently, Robert served as a last-minute replacement for the music director's usual pre-concert talk at The Portsmouth Music Hall.

Barry Jackson is a Professor Emeritus from Rivier University, where he taught for 25 years and served as the Chair of Modern Languages and Chair of the Rivier Honors Program. Following retirement, he taught English in China for four years and is now happy to be a RISE Facilitator.

Sheila Kabat has been a lover of art and art appreciation during her adult life. She learned to sketch and paint in her 20's. She has travelled to art museums in Spain, Ireland, France, Italy and throughout the US. She has enjoyed the opportunity to study/research artists and their works for and with RISE students for the last 20 years.

Marjorie Kamp has a BS from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, an MEd from Antioch College, and an MBA from Suffolk University. She taught and coached for 10 years in the Wellesley Public Schools, followed by years in procurement management at Digital Equipment Corporation, Raytheon, MetLife and EMD Millipore. She is an active outdoors person and lover of nature, especially birds and national parks, and she is concerned about the well-being of our environment.

Cal Knickerbocker, a former instructor and education manager at IBM, has taught at the University of Texas, Dallas, and at RISE since 1999.

Lorraine Ludwicki is a Life Coach and a Sacred Sound Practitioner. As a personal development coach, she shares tools and techniques to cultivate new interests and wake up latent aspirations for living life creatively with imagination and clarity. Expanding her experience to include Sound Therapy, she helps individuals achieve relaxation while playing her crystal and Tibetan sound bowls. She's integrated the healing resonance of sound and practical life coaching skills to serve others on a journey to well-being.

Lorraine Matkowsky has been teaching water aerobics since 2016. She is certified by the AEA (Aquatic Exercise Association) to teach water aerobics. Lorraine is also certified in CPR.

Dr. Ann McGreevey is a longtime educator and writer. She was a professor at Notre Dame College in NH and now lives in Marblehead, MA.

David McNeil has an MA in Education. He taught Social Studies for more than 30 years and is a long-time RISE facilitator.

Bob Meissner, Jr. has spent 50 years carving out careers across six fields—recruiting, banking, franchising, international business, community leadership, and teaching—holding 20 different roles. Fluent in Spanish and traveled widely, he earned an M.A. in International Management at Middlebury Graduate School and has completed over 100 courses in problem solving, business development, and education. A passionate speaker, career counselor, and youth mentor, Bob has volunteered with nearly 20 nonprofits. He is a biker, father of two professionals, and is married to an artist and animal activist. Bob has lived in the Monadnock Region for 25 years with his wife Jill. He has taught courses on life and listening at Keene State’s CALL program.”

Joanne Merrill was the Director of Athletics at Rivier University and has been a longtime instructor for the RISE Exercise Class. Let's get moving again!

Gretchen Nadeau has been teaching group exercise classes and personal training clients for over 30 years. She is certified through the National Exercise and Trainers Association (NETA) and holds a certification in Silver Sneakers. Gretchen is the Fitness Coordinator at Covenant Living, a retirement community in Keene, NH.

Ben Niles graduated from Drexel University with a BS in Management and a MBA in Finance. His 40 year career encompassed real estate sales, appraisal review, mortgage finance, & risk management. In retirement, Ben serves on the Merrimack Zoning Board of Adjustment, and NeighborWorks of the Southern NH Credit & Resource Development Committees.

Nancy Nordstrom, M.Ed., is a past RISE President, a frequent RISE facilitator, and chair of the RISE Curriculum Committee. She is the author of *Learning Later, Living Greater: The Secret for Making the Most of Your After-50 Years*. Prior to retirement, Nancy was the Director of the Road Scholar Institute Network.

Charlotte Pogue has a BA in Math from Northeastern University’s 5-year Cooperative Education program, earning enough to pay all her college expenses and graduate not owing a dime. She also has an MBA from SNHU, expenses paid by her employer. Retiring after forty-four years in Information Technology, she enjoys volunteering for Tax-Aide and the IRS’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) programs. Charlie enjoys participating and facilitating at RISE.

Valerie Raudonis is a native of Nashua where she practiced law for over 40 years, primarily in the areas of estate planning, probate, and family law. She is a former instructor in Rivier College’s paralegal program. Valerie is the author of the poetry collection *Sea Glass Secrets* and was a member of Poetry Society of NH’s board of directors. She initiated and co-hosts the monthly poetry readings of Poetry Nashua at the Nashua Public Library

William Sawyer holds an MBA from the University of Pennsylvania, a Ph.D. from the University of New York, and an MA from Boston College in Spirituality and Ministry. He presented workshops on spiritual transformation at two Franciscan centers and two prisons for more than 10 years.

Lynn Thieret is an RN who has taught in the nursing department at Rivier University for 30 years. She has an MSN from the University of Delaware and is a cardiothoracic clinical nurse specialist. She has taught card making and paper crafting classes for 28 years and has been an active participant in the RISE program for 15 years. She enjoys using her creativity to promote paper crafting. Each class is a fun and exciting time.

Barbara Toohey is a retired English teacher who has taught several literature courses at RISE. Her passion for poetry leads her to offer classes featuring poets such as Dickinson, Bronte, and Millay. Barbara has also participated in poetry workshops both at RISE and in other venues.

Ashish Usman has an MBA in MIS and Accounting from Indiana University's Kelly School of Business. In University he taught introductory accounting courses as a Teaching Assistant. Ashish has worked for a consulting firm (PricewaterhouseCoopers), a startup, Harvard University and Hyland Software as a project manager and then as a program manager implementing enterprise software. He is also a United States Marine Corps Veteran. Currently Ashish owns and operates a franchise of Home Helpers in Nashua. He lives in Milford with his wife Sandrine, their two daughters (ages 19 and 23) and their West Highland terrier Princess.

Terrie Vincent has a BA in History and an MA in Higher Education Administration, both from Boston University. She returned to college as an adult learner 24 years after dropping out! She believes that continuing education keeps one young in mind and heart. She enjoys volunteering, reading, and playing word games.

John Watkins is a 10-year facilitator at RISE. He spent the last 4 years of his 37-year career at Raytheon teaching fellow employees how to use technology. From laptops to cell phones John continues to stay abreast with new technology. He is also certified as an instructor by FEMA, CERT, and ALERRT to present courses such as Disaster Planning, Until Help Arrives, and Civilian Response to an Active Shooter. John is also a certified instructor for the Advanced Law Enforcement Rapid Response Training organization. ALERRT training is the preferred training of the FBI and many police departments, including our local police departments. John is a member of the AARP Fraud watch team and is also a National Cyber Security Association Champion. He speaks frequently to seniors about staying safe online.