



Brooklyn Public Library Launches Second Semester of Immigrant-Taught University Open Air

Open registration begins for free courses in the sciences and humanities, led by scholars from Colombia, Ghana, Nepal, Russia, Tunisia, and more

Semester two: February 24 – March 7

February 20, 2020 – **Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL), in partnership with Prospect Park Alliance (PPA), announced the professors from more than 15 countries who will be teaching free courses in the second semester of **University Open Air** (UOA), BPL’s “pop-up” university taking place February 24 through March 7. The second semester will move indoors to the Bedford Library branch (496 Franklin Ave).

This two-week semester will offer more than 25 free courses in the sciences, humanities, and other disciplines. The instructors include professors, researchers, and academics who were trained outside of the U.S. and are no longer able to teach in their respective fields due to their citizenship, visa status, or other constraints. An expansion of BPL’s mission to promote civic literacy and Prospect Park Alliance’s mission to engage the community, University Open Air offers a platform for the myriad immigrants in the New York area to share their knowledge with the community.

University Open Air will feature courses and workshops focused on biodiversity conservation, childhood brain development, civil engineering, Tang Dynasty poetry, urban planning, and more (full list of professors and courses below). In addition, there will be a course on the 2020 Census and its impact on undocumented persons. Participants in all courses will be able to access information about the census and how to take part.

UOA’s free and public courses showcase the remarkable talent in the city and expand BPL’s role as a catalyst for civic engagement for the borough’s 2.6 million residents. As a leader in reimagining the role of public libraries, BPL continues to develop innovative new programs. A free University Open Air toolkit, developed after a successful first semester this past summer, provides insight on how to replicate pop-up universities for libraries across.

For a full schedule of courses and to register, please visit www.bklynlibrary.org/university-open-air. Courses will take place on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and will be accessible and open to all levels of knowledge. Please check the website for the most current schedule. Walk-ins will be welcome.

“The remarkable group of professors that BPL and our colleagues at Prospect Park Alliance brought together for the inaugural semester of University Open Air is a perfect example of the diverse fabric that makes up Brooklyn and the entire New York community,” said **László Jakab Orsós, BPL’s Vice President of Arts and Culture**. “This year we received almost double the professorial applicants and are thrilled to welcome back many returning professors. Through programs like University Open Air, *A Night of Philosophy and Ideas*, and the 28th Amendment Project, the Library continues to be a space where people from across the borough—and the globe—can gather to share and debate ideas and offer different perspectives on subjects important to the community.”

In addition to courses taking place at BPL's Bedford Library, UOA will offer four special classes in subjects ranging from Chinese tea culture to data privacy, at Boutros (185 Atlantic Avenue), an immigrant-owned Middle Eastern restaurant. A temporary library will be on site at Boutros, and a meeting area for staff and students of University Open Air will be provided, as well as a mini café to purchase coffee and snacks. All participants will be invited to a commencement celebration on March 7 with complete details to be announced.

Following an open call for instructors, BPL worked closely with the Library's robust immigration and outreach services team to bring together a diverse range of professorial candidates. In advance of the lectures, professors participate in a teacher's training session to help structure the classes. All professors will be compensated for their work. University Open Air will return to Prospect Park again for a summer semester later this year, expanding the opportunities for potential professors to share their knowledge with the New York Community.

Immigrant services are a core offering from the Library, and BPL provides other programs for immigrants in the community in 14 different languages, as well as free financial counseling, citizenship application assistance, and career support.

ABOUT THE PROFESSORS AND COURSES

Marcelo Arroyave (Colombia) returns to the second semester of UOA to present two workshops on how to build a magazine inspired by participants' local neighborhoods using recycled materials such as old pictures, postcards, and letters. Arroyave is a researcher and counselor and has experience in postsecondary and K-12 education, with a focus on economically disadvantaged youth.

Safida Begum (Pakistan) will offer a course in childhood brain development, enhancing participants' understanding of age-appropriate activities for children at different development stages. Begum holds two master's degrees in education and is currently serving as a group teacher in a pre-K school in New York City.

Nadia Batoool Bokhari (Pakistan) returns to UOA following her summer course on Islamic history to offer a course on the 2020 census and its effects on undocumented citizens. Bokhari is a freelance journalist reporting on social justice, human rights, and healthcare, and is currently a 2020 Census Reporting Fellow through the Center for Community and Ethnic Media at CUNY.

Nadia Bongo (France) will offer two courses on French language and literature, with a focus on immigration and representations of beauty and ugliness. Bongo, currently writing a poetry collection, holds a PhD in French Language and Literature from Aix Marseille Université and taught in the French Academy for six years.

Kinza Hilali (Morocco) will lead a course on business law in Morocco, with a special focus on the amendments and reforms that Morocco has made in commercial and business laws in order to attract foreign investment. Hilali earned her PhD in Law and served as a judicial commissioner for Morocco's Ministry of Justice and Liberties.

Mustafa Ibraheem (Iraq) will lead a course in urban planning during which students will learn about the elements and structure of community development. He will also lead a second course in the spatial effect

of ISIS on the economic, social, and urban dimensions of Iraq. Ibraheem is an urban and regional planner with experience in community and spatial development, GIS, environmental planning, and consulting.

Pavel Ilin (Russia) returns to UOA following his summer semester lecture on transhumanism, to offer a course on building a more inclusive future. Ilin holds a master's degree in Philosophy of Culture and was enrolled in a PhD program before leaving Russia; most recently he completed a software engineering degree at the Flatiron School. He is currently a volunteer at the Refugee and Immigrant Fund in New York City and serves as Secretary for the U.S. Transhumanist party.

Sinan Kocaslán (Turkey) will offer a course that invites students to participate in and enjoy the process of photography. Kocaslán is a professional photographer with more than 25 years of experience, and is skilled in studio, indoor, and outdoor photography.

Eugene Opoku-Mensah (Ghana) will return to UOA for a course on data science. Opoku-Mensah is a computer science educator and researcher with experience working in higher education in both China and Ghana. He currently works as an adjunct professor of computer science at Essex County College and as a professor of computer science at Felician University.

Dr. Chok Tenzin Monlam (India) will offer a course on the secrets of rejuvenation and longevity, using his background in Buddhist meditation and Tibetan yoga. Dr. Monlam has spent over 10 years traveling and teaching Tibetan yoga and meditation methods.

Alain Kamga Noubissi (Cameroon) will use his background in mechanical engineering to lead a course in technical drawing. Noubissi is a mechanical engineer with more than 10 years of experience in maintaining industrial machines and overseeing manufacturing facilities.

Nichola Ramchurjee (India) will offer a course on biodiversity conservation, in which students will learn about protecting the environment immediately and into the future. Ramchurjee is an environmental activist with experience in research, biodiversity and natural resources conservation, and remediation and data analytics.

Nazia Roushan (Bangladesh) will lead a community development course designed for participants to discuss, discover, and improve various aspects of their localities, with an aim to build more robust and resilient local communities. Roushan is an urbanist with experience in community outreach and social media management. She recently served as a research assistant in Dhaka and New York City for a transit-oriented development plan.

Sajana Suwal (Nepal) will lead a course on structural engineering that will teach students about the basic tenets of civil engineering and how it relates to the most fundamental aspects of the world that surrounds us. Suwal is a researcher and lecturer in geotechnical earthquake engineering.

Stephen Tekpetey (Ghana) will offer a course on sustainable uses of bamboo and examine the importance of bamboo as a natural resource in today's climate crisis. Tekpetey is a research scientist and teaching professional who is currently an ISO technical committee member on bamboo and rattan standardization.

Asma Thabet (Tunisia) will be teaching a workshop on creative fantasy, where students will focus on utilizing vocal and physical techniques as a means of self-discovery. Thabet is a theater teacher,

psychodramatist, professional actor, and contemporary dancer with six years of experience in teaching at public and private high schools and at community art centers.

Brikena Xibinaku (Albania) will lead a class about the cultural intersection of Albania and Italy—not only about its demographics, but about their rich cultural and economic connections. Xibinaku is a translator and professor who has taught Italian language, culture, and literature; she has also worked as an editorial archivist and translator for RTSH (Albanian Radio and Television).

Ayoub Zareie (Iran) will present two courses on the meaning of self-blogging, and why female Iranians use blogging even though they have access to other social media platforms. Zareie is a social scientist who has extensive experience working with policy, research, and planning agencies in Iran and New York.

Julia Zhu (China) will offer two courses on Chinese tea ceremonies and Tang Dynasty poetry. Zhu is an expert in Chinese tea culture and Tang Dynasty culture and is currently a Survivor Leader in Community (SLIC) with Womankind, a New York-based organization that works with survivors of gender-based violence.

ABOUT BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs, and public computers. BPL's eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at [our website](#).

ABOUT PROSPECT PARK ALLIANCE

Prospect Park Alliance is the non-profit organization that sustains, restores, and advances Prospect Park, Brooklyn's Backyard, in partnership with the City. The Alliance provides critical staff and resources that keep the Park green and vibrant for the diverse communities that call Brooklyn home. Learn more at www.prospectpark.org.

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