

Special Interest Presentations

During a seventy-five minute time period on Friday afternoon of Reunion, classmates will be offering mini-classes on various subjects about which they are knowledgeable and passionate. We currently have five presentations with room for more. Take a look at the descriptions below to get a feel for our current topics, and if you would like to do your own presentation, please get in touch with Gerry Bell, David Walden or Peter Wonson.

The Supreme Court: Nine Justices; So Why 500 Staff? (Noel Augustyn)

The Supreme Court is not only “the highest court in the land,” it is also a museum and a library, it has its own police force —and a carpenter shop. Affectionately called “The Marble Palace,” it is almost a small city unto itself. It employs ten officers, ranging from a general counsel to a press officer, to manage its many non-judicial functions. The Chief Justice, too, has several non-case load responsibilities. He is, for example, chairman of three federal judiciary agencies, and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian institution. I served as chief of staff for the late Chief Justice William Rehnquist, and will discuss my work with the Chief Justice in these little known areas, as well as with other members of the Rehnquist Court, e.g. Associate Justices Brennan, White, Marshall, Blackmun, Powell, Stevens, O’Connor, Scalia and Kennedy.

Cosmology, The Big Picture: The Origin, History, and Ultimate Fate of the Universe (Gerry Bell)

Before we came to Dartmouth, a debate still existed about the fundamental nature of the universe. Was it infinite, unchanging, and eternal – backward in time as well as forward? Or did it have a beginning – and if so, when, what was it like, how did the universe evolve, and will it have an end? The last 50 years have been the Golden Age of cosmology – we now have most of the answers and are on the verge of the rest. I’ll review all of these, share how we arrived at them, and pose the remaining questions. No advanced math or physics, I promise, except the simplest and most important equation of all: $E=mc^2$. I’ll finish by showing you two of the most staggering and humbling photographs ever taken.

Birds of the Americas (Warren Cooke)

Photography is a long-time hobby of mine. I’ve also been an avid birder for 40 years, and served on the board of trustees of the American Bird Conservancy for many years. I am the immediate past president of that organization, having just finished a four-year term. While I photograph a lot of other subjects, including other wildlife, baseball and grandchildren, birds are my #1 passion in terms of photography. This presentation will highlight photos I have taken of birds in North, Central and South America, and will include as well a lot of amazing facts about birds. I think you will find the photos fascinating, and my objective is to make this presentation fun and interesting.

Hong Kong to New York TransAtlantic Yacht Racing (Rich duMoulin)

Many Dartmouth folks share a passion for the outdoors – I ski and mountain climb, but my passion is ocean racing. Teammate Rich Wilson (Harvard '72) and I hold the record from Hong Kong to New York (72 days nonstop). Other events in which I have participated include Transpacific, Transatlantic, Sydney-Hobart and Fastnet (a famous biennial offshore yacht race in the waters of the United Kingdom). In 2015 I skippered the 48-foot "Carina" in the Transatlantic Race with roommate Lee Reichart '68 aboard as a watch captain. This presentation will include some incredible ocean racing videos.

Poetical Musicology (Peter Wonson)

I began teaching this class in 1973, when it first became apparent to me that in an academic/intellectual context people were not taking rock music seriously, despite the brilliance of the Beatles and other rock luminaries. I have presented this topic to both students and faculty colleagues at the secondary school and college level. This is very much an interactive exercise, which focuses on the intersection of lyrics and instrumentation (including the voice as an instrument) in rock songs, specifically how the music reinforces the lyrics and helps to tell the story. You'll have the opportunity to analyze the intent and meaning of song lyrics, and assess how the music undergirds, and in its own manner tells the same story as, the lyrics. You will be encouraged to share your conclusions.