

Osher at W&M 2026: In Celebration of Revolutionary Ideas

As we count down the days to our nation's semiquincentennial, we'll be exploring concepts that have made an indelible mark on the world – across the ages.

Here's how Osher's 2026 "Revolutionary Ideas" came to be.

In the nascent days of 2024, Osher Instructor **Mark Howell** was already thinking ahead a full year – or two.

The newly (one-month) retired education director for the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation and former Colonial Williamsburg Foundation staffer was channeling the year 2026.

Mark was contemplating how Osher at W&M might align with local educational happenings – inspired by VA250 (read more at right) – to commemorate the 250th anniversary of our country's July 1776 founding, as well as the centennial of John D. Rockefeller's March 1926 visit to Williamsburg that inspired the restoration of Virginia's colonial capital.

When **Mark** shared his vision with Osher Instructor and Curriculum Committee History Coordinator **Karen McPherson**, she was on board. The **Osher Team** needed only a chat over coffee to know the idea would resonate. Osher Member **Rick Morrison** and Instructor **Michael Lorence** joined the conversation to flesh out the concept. **Rick** then recruited veteran Instructor **Bill Rhodes** to lend additional perspective. Insights from 2024-25 Curriculum Committee Chair **Barney Feingold** and Co-Chair **John Delano** further nurtured the concept of

“Revolutionary ideas are born of a desire for change. Revolutionary ideas can engender profound, enduring transformation of beliefs, practices, and systems, creating a new status quo.”

– Osher Curriculum Committee
2026 “Revolutionary Ideas”
Workgroup

“revolution” beyond just the American independence movement to a universal notion of how “revolutions” across the ages and disciplines have changed the world.

Within weeks, the workgroup was ready to share the concept with the full complement of Osher Instructors. Forty-six Instructors attended a half-

day March 2025 workshop. A subsequent hour-long Zoom call introduced the initiative to 13 more.

Our Instructors embraced the concept, bringing new energy, new ideas, and more than 60 new or adapted existing courses to the Fall semester. Each highlights a “Revolutionary Idea” in the celebratory environment of

this commemorative year.

And so, in the name of lifelong learning, community spirit, civic pride, and general wonderment, we hope you'll enjoy exploring a variety of ground-breaking theories, events, inventions, noble causes and exceptional people that advanced human progress through the brilliance of a Revolutionary Idea.



Look for the lantern for courses featuring a “Revolutionary Idea” throughout the Osher 2025-26 course catalogs.



VA250 – Sharing Virginia's Role in Making America

While the Osher Institute at William & Mary is celebrating all styles of Revolutionary Ideas in this semiquincentennial year, the Commonwealth of Virginia, too, is sharing the Spirit of '76.

Better known as VA250, the Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission was established by Virginia's General Assembly in 2020.

The Commission describes its work: “With your help, we can *educate* Americans about our history; *engage* with every community to tell a complete story; and *inspire* people to recommit to the values inherent in citizenship. Ultimately helping us form the “more perfect union” envisioned by the Revolutionary generation.”

With more than 2,000 events scheduled across the state over the next 365 days, VA250 aims to showcase the pivotal role of Virginia's people and places in forging America's legacy as the land of the free and home of the brave. Learn more at [VA250.org](https://va250.org).

