

History: Iconic Documents

Sure, everyone knows of the *Magna Carta* and the *American Declaration of Independence*, but have you read them? During six Friday mornings we will focus on watershed events that brought peace, led to wars, furthered liberties or ended slavery, and we will read the iconic documents associated with them. Join us in this innovative course. The documents are very short (2-5 pages), and copies will be provided.

September 23: *The Magna Carta (1215)*

Is the *Magna Carta* the basis of our liberties and parliamentary rule?. Or was it a feudal agreement among King John, the English church and the King's Norman barons? We look at the *Magna Carta* in the context of three crises that marked John's reign: his second marriage, a bitter dispute with the pope, and a rebellion by his barons.

Presented by Garrett Polman (PhD/Chicago) pursued graduate studies in Classics and History at Chicago, Berlin and at Oxford and teaches at ElderCollege and SFU.

September 30: *The Declaration of Independence: Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution*

The *Declaration of Independence* has been seen as "inventing America" and as "American Scripture". We will look at how the Declaration's language and purpose fits those claims in the context of the war for American independence and the eventual emergence of the United States twelve years later and the design and objective of the *Constitution of the United States*.

Presented by Eric Nellis (PhD/UBC), professor emeritus of History at UBC and an acknowledged expert on the American colonial period.

October 7: *Abolition of Slavery Act (1833)*

By the late 18th century Britain was the leading slave trading nation in the western world. The movement for abolition began in 1787 and encountered huge resistance from special interests. Led by William Wilberforce, the movement gained success in 1807 when Parliament abolished the slave trade from Africa. Emancipation of slavery was a greater challenge and was associated with the great movement for social reform and led to the freeing of almost one million blacks in the British Empire in 1834.

Presented by Allan Orr (MA/UBC). Allan is a retired History teacher and founder of ElderCollege's history courses.

October 14: *Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the Road to Civil War*

After the settlement of the Oregon territory and acquisition of the American south-west from Mexico, new states were being admitted into the union, but northern opposition to the “peculiar institution” of slavery spreading to the new states intensified. In 1854 Senator Stephen Douglas of Illinois introduced the *Kansas-Nebraska Act* which opened the door for expanding slavery into Kansas. Why did Senator Douglas introduce such a contentious bill, and why did men like Abraham Lincoln join the new Republican Party in opposition to it? And how did the new law make civil war more likely? These questions and more will be explored in this talk on American politics in the 1850s.

Presented by Bob Fuhr (MA/McGill), instructor in History at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and an expert in post-colonial American history.

October 21: *Documents on the Road to World War II*

We'll look at three short documents: *Wilson's XIV Points* (1918), the *Munich Agreement* of 1938 which agreed to the partitioning of Czechoslovakia (the epic document - “peace in our time” - of appeasement of Hitler), and the secret clauses of the 1939 *Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact* between Hitler and Stalin to partition Poland and hand the Baltic republics back to the USSR. Just over a week later World War II broke out.

Presented by Garrett Polman.

October 28: *The Objective of European Union - Lasting Peace (1950)*

In 1945 Europe lay in ruin, the second time in a generation. Would Europeans be able to overcome a thousand year history of devastating wars? Visionary leaders now sought to secure lasting peace and security through a radical new formula - economic union such that war was no longer thinkable. We will read the *Schumann Declaration* of May 1950, the agreement that announced the formation of what eventually became the European Union. We will see that this objective - a lasting peace in Europe - is embodied in all major EU treaties since.

Presented by Garrett Polman.