



**Brooklyn Public Library Announces,
in partnership with Prospect Park Alliance,
Fourth Semester of Immigrant-Taught
University Open Air**

Led by Scholars from 14 Countries

*Courses Focusing on Climate Change to Modern Mythology and The Evolution of New York City
Will Take Place in Prospect Park from September 9 – 19,*

Offering an open and welcoming space for Learning and Civic Engagement to all New Yorkers

September 7, 2021 – **Brooklyn Public Library** (BPL), in partnership with **Prospect Park Alliance** (PPA), announced today the fourth semester of immigrant-taught **University Open Air**, a “pop-up” university taking place September 9 through September 19 near the Prospect Park Boathouse and surrounding area. Led by an Iranian social scientist, a Taiwanese poet, Ghanaian data scientist, and Chilean artist (full list of professor and courses found below), University Open Air will provide courses and workshops focused on a wide range of topics including climate change, Tibetan self-healing massage, French art and culture. Gnawa music, the history and evolution of New York City and the role COVID-19 will play in the city’s future.

Courses will take place outdoors on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. All courses at University Open Air are free and open to the public, providing a platform for immigrants from around New York to share their knowledge with and strengthen the fabric of the community.

“We are thrilled to welcome back to the fourth semester of University Open Air, so many remarkable professors who are a perfect example of the diverse fabric that make Brooklyn and the entire New York Community the beautiful melting pot that it is,” said **László Jakab Orsós, BPL’s Vice President of Arts and Culture**. “Through programs like University Open Air, we’re able to expand the Library’s commitment to being a center of ideas and exploration and offer a space where people from across the borough can gather to share and debate ideas and offer difference perspectives on subjects important to the community.”

"Prospect Park serves many immigrant communities, and we recognize just how important it is to learn from those with different backgrounds," said **María Carrasco, Vice President of Public Programs at Prospect Park Alliance**. "We aim to provide our community with accessible opportunities to broaden their world, and we thank the Brooklyn Public Library for partnering with us to bring this phenomenal lineup of classes to the park."

University Open Air will take place near the Prospect Boat House, located at 101 East Drive in Brooklyn. In order to ensure the health and safety of all involved, University Open Air classes will have limited capacity, utilize social distancing measures, and require masks be worn by all participants. **For a full schedule of courses and to register, please visit www.bklynlibrary.org/university-open-air. Courses will be accessible and open to all levels of knowledge. Please check the website for the most current schedule and health protocols. Walk-ins will be welcome.**

The program is a part of BPL's mission to provide access to information for all who seek it; and an extension of Prospect Park Alliance's mission to engage the diverse communities that consider the park "Brooklyn's Backyard." To date UOA has welcomed nearly 1000 students to its classes. Since inception in 2019, BPL and PPA have worked closely with the Library's robust immigration and outreach services team, along with Upwardly Global, to train a diverse range of professorial candidates to participate in the program. In addition to University Open Air, BPL provides a wide array of free services for immigrants, including programs in 14 different languages, conversation groups, free financial counseling and citizenship application assistance. In advance of the lectures, professors will participate in a teacher's training session to help structure the classes. All professors will be compensated for their work.

ABOUT THE PROFESSORS AND COURSES

Alon Andorn (Israel) will teach *Modern Mythology of the American Superhero* (and other courses), where students will deconstruct the metaphors behind the pages and discuss how they reflect societal issues of race, gender, and geopolitical authority in American history. Andorn holds a Master of Arts degree and a bachelor's degree in visual communication. Prior to immigrating to the U.S., Andorn taught art and design in various higher education establishments for over a decade.

Marcelo Arroyave (Colombia) will present a class on how the city was created and its evolution from the past to the present. Participants will learn about the social revolution, the industrial revolution, and how globalization has shaped cities over time, as well as how COVID-19 will change New York as we know it. Arroyave is a researcher and counselor who has worked in postsecondary and K-12 education, with a focus on economically disadvantaged youth.

Sol Avi Erez (Israel) will offer four photography-related courses. The first will be a hands-on class that allows students to experiment with photographic processes. In the second, Avi Erez will lead a discussion on portrait photography examining a diverse range of artists and photographers who use the camera lens as a tool to explore identity and push against boundaries of culture, heritage, and gender roles. Avi Erez will also conduct a creative workshop in which participants can use their own camera or phone for learning (making mistakes and "failing" are encouraged). Avi Erez holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in art education from HaMidrasha School of Art in Beit-Berl, Israel, and a master's in fine arts degree from the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Michigan. He is an adjunct professor at the County College of Morris in New Jersey, and the co-founder of Wick Gallery in Brooklyn, New York.

Nadia Bongo (France) will offer four courses on French language, literature, and music, with a focus on representations of beauty and ugliness. Bongo is currently writing a poetry collection. She holds a doctorate degree in French language and literature from Aix Marseille Université and taught in the French Academy for six years.

Chia-lun Chang (Taiwan) returns this semester to offer classes on contemporary Taiwanese poetry and how students can utilize thematic concepts from these works as a guide to generate new work. In addition to being a published author, Chang has performed at MoMA PS1, Ace hotel, Poetry project, and Queens Museum; and lectured at Pratt Institute, Queens College, New York Foundation for the Arts, Tougaloo College, and Hanoi University of Business and Technology.

Eugene Opoku-Mensah (Ghana) will share his knowledge in a course structured to develop participants **data science skills**. Opoku-Mensah is a computer science educator and researcher with experience

working in higher education in both China and Ghana. He is an assistant professor at Felician University in the field of health informatics.

Nichola Ramchurjee (India) will offer a course on how humans can curb their own activities that cause climate change. Ramchurjee has more than 10 years of experience in research, biodiversity and natural resources conservation, remediation, and data analytics. She explores social aspects in her environmental work and has published numerous research articles and books.

Dr. Chok Tenzin Monlam (Tibet) will offer **mindfulness and meditation sessions**. Dr. Tenzin Monlam has spent over 10 years traveling and teaching Tibetan yoga and meditation methods.

Stephen Tekpetey (Ghana) will offer a course that aims to introduce students to different types of proposals and how to write them step by step. Tekpetey is a research and teaching professional with over seven years of experience. He is a current intern at New York-Presbyterian and a member of the technical committee of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO/ TC 296).

Denise Wiley (Japan) will present two courses. The first, entitled *Cultural Awareness in a Multicultural World*, is an interactive discussion where participants will explore various ways to navigate cultural differences whilst using shared similarities to strengthen communities. In the second, *Making our Own News*, participants will get a crash course in turning any topic into a newsworthy article. Wiley is a journalist, public relations practitioner and instructor of English as a second language. Prior to moving to the US, Wiley lived in Japan for five years where she taught business English, cultural awareness, and business communication.

Ayoub Zareie (Iran) will present a course on how to define the most common types of misinformation we encounter daily via social media, as well as how misinformation impacts our personal lives and steps that can be taken to address it. Zareie is a social scientist who has extensive experience working with policy, research, and planning agencies in Iran and New York. He most recently worked as a data analyst with Columbia University.

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ABOUT BROOKLYN PUBLIC LIBRARY

[Brooklyn Public Library](#) is one of the nation's largest library systems and among New York City's most democratic institutions. As a leader in developing modern 21st-century libraries, we provide resources to support personal advancement, foster civic literacy, and strengthen the fabric of community among the more than 2.7 million individuals who call Brooklyn home. We provide nearly 60,000 free programs a year with writers, thinkers, artists, and educators—from around the corner and around the world. And we give patrons millions of opportunities to enjoy one of life's greatest satisfactions: the joy of a good book.

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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