

# Gray Matters 2: Critical Thinking for Seniors

Spring, 2026 Mondays, 2:30-4:15 pm Virtual

Gail Knapp (gail.knapp1@gmail.com)

Gray Matters 2: Critical Thinking for Seniors Sharpen your critical thinking skills to protect your mind and finances. This course explores how and why we are persuaded to believe false information, particularly related to scams and voting. We will also examine the newest scientific research on memory, dementia, and other medical issues, teaching you to discern what is true.



This semester, the course will emphasize health and food issues. We will look at memory, the psychology of democracy, and the nature of science, including the theory of evolution. Specific weekly topics are listed below. A PowerPoint is created for each session and emailed to those registered for the class. These PowerPoints are very detailed and include many references (mainly on YouTube) for further information. Unlike some other all-virtual courses, this one encourages class participation.

## Date

2/2 & 2/9 The first two classes will focus on the psychology of persuasion. Was your last Thanksgiving dinner difficult? We will look at how to improve it. From the use and misuse of the concept of cult to cognitive dissonance. Psychology provides insight into how we think and handle information. What is gaslighting, and why is it not just lying?

2/16 President's Day holiday

2/23 Memory and what we can and can't do about it. What is the best kind of evidence? It may not be what you think.

3/2 Where did we come from? All about the theory of evolution that you didn't learn in school, because it is all so very recently discovered.

3/9 & 23 A brief history of some of the most important foods for health and from history. What part of the advertising is hype and placebo? And what part is based on science?

3/30 & 4/6 & 13 Medical reality based in science, and what you can do if you encounter people who believe in pseudoscience. How can you decide what to believe without having to go to medical school?

## **Bio for Gail Knapp, Ph.D., J.D. PRP—**

Gail retired after teaching psychology for 38 years at a Michigan community college. During that time, she was vice president of the faculty association for 7 years, which made her chair of the college's academic decision-making body. She was also the author of two psychology textbook Instructor Manuals, and the advisor and Michigan state coordinator for the Phi Theta Kappa honor society for twelve years. While her family still includes one dog and two cats, she no longer breeds and shows Brussels Griffons and Great Pyrenees dogs and has retired as a dog show judge after many years in the ring.

She moved to Las Vegas to escape the snow and ice and because she had fallen in love with the city during a regular summer visit to an annual conference on the topics we will be covering in this class. The conference sparked the creation of the Perception v. Reality Course for OLLI, which is now called "Gray Matters." I will also send you my detailed PowerPoint from each class, which includes links to many YouTube videos you may find interesting for exploring the topic more fully.

Her belief in active learning stems from her academic work, including earning degrees in psychology: a B.A. from Stony Brook University, an M.A. from Hofstra University in New York, and a Ph.D. from Michigan State University. She also earned a J.D. from Cooley Law School, beginning at age 62. She often says that this shows a love of lifelong learning. She has taught for OLLI every semester for 14 years, including classes on the English language, critical thinking, parliamentary procedure, and psychology.

She passed the examinations to become a professionally registered parliamentarian twenty-five years ago and occasionally serves clients by helping them with procedures at their meetings or with their bylaws. She has been president of the Nevada State Association of Parliamentarians, was vice-chair of the national Commission on Credentialing for five years and held many other parliamentary offices. She regularly teaches online parliamentary procedure classes and workshops and is the current president of the Las Vegas Unit of the National Association of Parliamentarians.

She has been married to Lynn for 47 years and has an adult daughter and one granddaughter living in Ohio and Michigan. She loves OLLI and has served as a mentor, a member, and a chair of the curriculum committee for several years. She served for five years on the OLLI Steering Council, serving as secretary. A few years ago, she was honored with an honorary life membership in the OLLI at UNLV. She is currently working on establishing a special interest group called "Quiz Quest," where, on one early evening each month, we get together on Zoom for social time and to learn new things.