



OLLI NU SOCIAL INTEREST GROUPS (SIGS)

OLLI social interest groups (SIGs) are a benefit offered to all OLLI members. The groups foster fellowship by allowing OLLI members to engage with others who share a common interest. SIGs complement and enhance study groups and other programs offered by OLLI; they are not meant to compete with or duplicate them. Commercial or professional solicitation for services or products is not permitted at SIG meetings.

SIGs provide OLLI members with an opportunity to get together with others to discuss a topic of interest (e.g. travel, theater, music) or to share an activity they have in common (e.g. visual art, bridge, gardening). A shared interest group is not exclusively social, though participation in these groups may contribute to camaraderie and building friendships. The OLLI director will review each SIG proposal to ensure a fit within the SIG model. Approved SIG information will be posted on MyOLLI for all members to access.

SIGs, even more than most OLLI programs, are member-driven, not staff-driven. They are established, managed and run by OLLI members. OLLI staff members post SIG information on MyOLLI, and can promote SIGs in newsletters. A SIG's vitality and success depends mainly upon the active participation and commitment of its own members.

An OLLI NU Social Interest Group...

- Explores a shared interest that is not generally covered in study groups and does not compete with study groups.
- Meets regularly (e.g. weekly, monthly).
- Can have multiple leaders, but a single leader is designated as the point of contact.
- Meets outside of regular study group hours (not 9:45am–11:45am or 1:15pm–3:15pm Monday–Thursday).
- Meets off-campus. SIGs may use common spaces at 500 Davis and Wieboldt Hall only during OLLI lunch hours (12:00pm–1:00pm Monday–Thursday during Fall, Spring, and Summer terms).

[Click here to access the OLLI NU SIG application form.](#)

A Social Interest Group leader...

- Is a current member of OLLI.
- Is willing to have contact information (email) included on MyOLLI and in OLLI newsletters.
- Plans all group activities including any special guests or programs.
- Makes decisions based on the needs and safety of members.
- Adheres to a 'one guest, one time' policy for SIGs.
- Focuses on welcoming new members to the group.
- Coordinates meeting space as needed
- Keeps a list of attendees
- Notifies participants when it is necessary to cancel a meeting or move to a different location.
- Helps members of the group set norms for processes and behavior
- Maintains a welcoming and positive atmosphere.
- Ensures that members of the group are not solicited for anyone's personal gain.

OLLI Social Interest Groups (SIGs) FAQs:

Why are we doing this?

Many of the 124 OLLIs across the country offer SIGs as a way for members to socialize and build community outside of class. Why not try it at OLLI NU?

Can non-OLLI members join my SIG?

No, OLLI SIGs are for members only. However, you may invite a friend to visit a meeting as long as it's okay with the SIG leader(s).

Couldn't I just set up a group like this outside of OLLI?

Of course, and you are welcome to do so! This is just a ready-made way to connect and socialize with other OLLI members, and a great way to further enjoy our OLLI community!

Who organizes the SIG meetings?

SIGs are organized by one or more leaders. Members can stay in touch with each other via email. The only role OLLI staff will play is to post the general info and contacts on MyOLLI.

Can I use OLLI space for my meetings?

SIGs may only meet in common spaces at 500 Davis and in Wieboldt Hall during lunch (12–1) on days that study groups are in session (Monday–Thursday during Fall, Spring, and Summer terms).

Can the OLLI staff help me book a space for my SIG?

No. SIGs can only use common spaces during lunch hours. Otherwise, SIGs are encouraged to meet in public spaces like coffee shops, libraries, and community centers. SIGs may also meet in private spaces such as homes or reserved spaces if coordinated by the SIG leaders.

Can my SIG meet virtually?

Yes! We encourage in-person meetings, but virtual SIGs can be a great way for folks in virtual study groups to connect outside of class.

Can OLLI staff help me set up a Zoom?

No. Staff are not available to set up or troubleshoot Zoom calls. Members must use their own Zoom accounts, as OLLI Zoom accounts can only be used for study groups.

How do I join a SIG?

A list of SIGs will be posted on MyOLLI with contact information for the leader. Simply contact the leader, and they will share the details to join.

Do I need to register for a SIG through Augustsoft?

Nope! Simply contact the SIG leader listed on MyOLLI.

Do I need to take attendance?

For this first year, the OLLI staff would appreciate it if you would keep a list of attendees so that we can get a sense of the success of the SIG program. At the end of the academic year we will reach out to ask you for your list of attendees and some feedback on how it went.

What if I have more questions about SIGs?

Call or email OLLI Director Emily Ferrin: 847-467-5272, emily.ferrin@northwestern.edu.

What if there's a problem with my SIG?

Call or email OLLI Director Emily Ferrin: 847-467-5272, emily.ferrin@northwestern.edu. In case of emergency, call 911.

What are some ideas for SIG topics?

Glad you asked! Some of the most popular SIGs at other OLLIs include:

- **Games:** Mahjong, Bridge, Crosswords, Video games
- **Arts & Crafts:** Knitting & Crochet, Woodworking, Visual Arts
- **Sports & Outdoors:** Chicago sports, Hiking, Cycling, Walking, Swimming
- **Social & Cultural Topics:** Museums, Restaurants, Theater, Travel, Music