

OLLI at DU Syllabus

Facilitator Name	Peter Gilbert
Facilitator Email Address	terens.gilbert@gmail.com
Course Title	NOTABLE SCIENTISTS AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS: A Speaker Series
Site	OLLI South
Term	Winter 2025
Course Sessions	7 Weeks
Week 1	Peter Gilbert's first lecture will feature 2 female scientists; double Nobel Prize winner Marie Curie who experimented with radioactivity and discovered radium and polonium, and Vera Rubin who was the first astronomer to prove the existence of dark matter in the universe.
Week 2	Charles Holt will present on John Archibald Wheeler, a world-renowned American theoretical physicist, who was largely responsible for reviving interest in general relativity in the US after WW II. He worked with Niels Bohr in explaining basic principles behind nuclear fission. Wheeler was a professor at Princeton University until retirement in 1976.
Week 3	Ira Rifkin will present on leaders in infectious disease care.
Week 4	Peter Gilbert's lecture will focus mainly on Albert Einstein's life and work, with a short discussion on Ernest Rutherford who discovered the atomic nucleus of the atom.

Week 5

Anne Bennett will explore the following: Lynn Margulis was an evolutionary biologist who advanced the theory of evolution through symbiosis. Her work on the formation of life on Earth was controversial at the time. She was married to Carl Sagan. Carl Sagan was a planetary astronomer and communicator. He is best known for his work in extraterrestrial life and the development of amino acids from basic chemicals and light. He was a frequent guest on the Johnny Carson show. He was the first to send messages into space using language that it was believed to be understood by anyone.

Week 6

Ron Knox will highlight English mathematician Thomas Bayes: The Bayes Theorem is a fundamental component of AI tools, particularly those dealing with probabilistic reasoning and machine learning.

Ken Sweet will discuss two scientists / geophysicists, Harold Seigel and Phillip Hallof. Both were leaders in early mining geophysics. Without their expertise and inventions, we would not have the mineral resources we have today.

Week 7

Peter Gilbert will talk about Steven Hawking and Black Holes followed by Kip Thorne and Gravitational Waves. These lectures require no previous knowledge and will be non-mathematical.