

LATER LIFE LEARNING

SERIES A: Words and Music: Leonard Cohen

Mondays, 10:00 – 11:45 am, January 14 to March 25, 2019
No class February 18, 2019 for Reading Week

Innis College, Town Hall

Lecturer:

Dr. Mike Daley holds a Ph.D in music from York University and has taught undergraduate courses at Guelph, McMaster, Waterloo and York Universities as well as acclaimed later-life courses across the GTA. Mike is a specialist in popular music history and has published widely.

Overview:

Leonard Cohen is one of the great literary and musical figures in Canadian history. From his affecting and skillful early poetry and novels to his stunning and enduring music, Leonard Cohen's work continues to fascinate. Two years after his death at 82, his work is as relevant as ever. His keen observations and impassioned writing and composing still resonate today.

Cohen is best remembered today for iconic musical compositions like "Hallelujah" and "Suzanne," songs that could only he could have written. He possessed a distinctive writing voice as unique as his hypnotic baritone singing voice. But Leonard Cohen was also a public figure, with an image as a ladies' man and a fine dresser. His life outside of music and literature was often as interesting as his writing, with memorable romantic relationships and long friendships, as well as eventful sojourns from his native Montreal to Israel, the Greek island of Hydra and Mount Baldy Zen Center.

In this ten-week course, Dr. Mike Daley tells the incredible life story of Leonard Cohen in detail, using the best available research. Mike will select some of Cohen's best poetic, prose and lyric work for deeper discussion, but we won't forget about his music - the memorable melodies, Cohen's haunting Spanish-style guitar playing and his laconic vocal delivery.
ballet.

1. January 14: Early years and school days

In this lecture we will cover Leonard Cohen's childhood and family life, continuing through his university career and the publications of his first two books of poetry.

2. January 21: Hydra and the Golden Boy of Montreal poetry

After being awarded a Canada Council grant, Cohen heads to a Greek island and writes prolifically. His novel *The Favourite Game* brings him acclaim. We'll view the 1965 short documentary *Ladies and Gentlemen, Mr. Leonard Cohen*.

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3. January 28: Leonard Cohen, songwriter - New York and the first album

Spinning his wheels and short on cash, Cohen decided to pursue a career as a songwriter. In New York, he made valuable connections and his songs were well received, leading to a record contract and the release of *Songs of Leonard Cohen*.

4. February 4: The 1970s - Part 1

The first Leonard Cohen concert tour in 1970 was a riotous affair and the beginning of a run of memorable concerts. His albums including *Songs from a Room* and *New Skin for The Old Ceremony* contained some classic songs.

5. February 11: The 1970s - part 2

Already a songwriting legend but with diminishing record sales, Cohen finished the decade with the Phil Spector-produced *Death of a Lady's Man* and the lovely *Recent Songs*.

***Note: NO CLASS on February 18th**

6. February 25: Challenges and changing times

Facing a new pop music landscape in the 1980s, Cohen began to compose his music on a synthesizer and make promotional music videos. His career in decline, his 1985 album *Various Positions* contained a song not much noticed at first, "Hallelujah."

7. March 4: The icon and the monk

Cohen's career was at a low ebb when a number of tribute albums as well as his own strong albums *I'm Your Man* and *The Future* revived his fame and acclaim. Not long after winning the Juno award for best male vocalist ("only in Canada," he quipped) in 1993, Leonard Cohen entered Mount Baldy Zen Center near Los Angeles and lived the life of a Zen Buddhist monk for five years.

8. March 11: Robbed and re-emerging

Emerging from the monastery to record a new album in 2000, Cohen looked towards retirement. But the embezzlement of his savings by his manager forced Cohen to resume touring, much to the delight of his fans.

9. March 18: Back to the songwriting racket

Along with his acclaimed concert tours, Cohen resumed publishing written work with *Book of Longing* in 2006 and recorded collaborations with his backup singers.

10. March 25: Last works

Leonard Cohen's last three albums, culminating with *You Want It Darker*, represent some of his best work. With his death in November 2016 at 82, Leonard Cohen was silenced but the accolades and tributes continue for this great Canadian cultural icon.