

ANTARCTIC EXPLORATIONS

This seven-session lecture course will examine the exploration of Antarctica starting with the voyages of Captain James Cook in the 18th Century and continuing to solo traverses of the Continent in the 21st Century. Each lecture will include the use of videos when available. The initial class session will provide an overview of Antarctic geography, weather and climate, research facilities, some fauna, and the impact of climate change.

The Heroic Age of Antarctic exploration began very late in the 19th Century and concluded a few years after the end of World War I. Preceding this period, a number of explorers led expeditions into the total unknown of the far South. We will discuss several of those expeditions. During the Heroic Age many expeditions took place, but the major “heroes” of that Age were Robert Falcon Scott, Ernest Shackleton, Roald Amundsen and Douglas Mawson. You may never have heard of Mawson, but the saga of his struggle for survival in unimaginably difficult conditions is absolutely thrilling and moving. Amundsen led the first expedition to reach the South Pole, winning a race against Scott. Scott led two expeditions to Antarctica, as did Shackleton. Each of their expeditions required courage, unshakable determination and a willingness to endure extraordinary hardships. We will examine in depth the expeditions led by all of these men and experience vicariously their triumphs, frustrations, and, particularly in the case of Scott, their tragedies.

After the Heroic Age, exploration by airplane and motorized vehicles began. We will discuss the flight over the South Pole of Admiral Richard Byrd and the crossing of Antarctica by Vivian Fuchs and Edmund Hillary using tractor-like vehicles. More recently adventurers have focused on solo traverses of the Continent, and we will examine several of those, including the first solo traverse by a woman.

The course will conclude with an emotional and inspiring tale and video of the climbing of an Antarctic mountain by a very senior citizen.

Harold Kuskin, a retired lawyer and judge, is passionate about Antarctica and fascinated by the sagas of fortitude, survival, and tragedy of Antarctic explorers. He has traveled to the Antarctic Peninsula twice and to the Ross Sea and has made two trips to South Georgia Island. For the past six years, Harold has taught courses at the Evergreen Forum about another passion, opera.

Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m.–noon starting February 28 through April 11 for 7 sessions
Hybrid — Lecture — Unlimited