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807F From Placenta to Pathology: The Duality of Our Viral Genes
Lecture I
September 29, October 6, 13 & 20, 2025

Suresh Mohla
smohla16@gmail.com

Human Endogenous Retro Virus (HERVs)
What is covered in this 4-part series?

Today

- Define HERVs (Endogenous) Retro? Viral? Genes?
- How old are the HERVs in us and our ancestral genomes?
- Genes are only part of our DNA that are preceded to make specific proteins. So, how do genes make proteins?
- How do HERV genes make viral proteins? What is **new** about them?
- What role do they play in human pregnancy?

These ancient invaders continue to shape our biology, for better or for worse.
These viruses came in as waves of infections over the last 100 million years, almost to the present, as recently as 50,000 - 150,000 years ago.

Fishes (~500 Mya)
Egg laying Mammals 200-160 Mya
Marsupials 166 Mya
Mammals (~100 Mya)

Is the placenta an endocrine organ?

- Yes --- absolutely.
- The placenta is not just a nutrient/oxygen exchange surface, but a major **transient endocrine organ**.
- Hormones secreted by the placenta include:
 - **hPL** (human chorionic gonadotropin) - maintains corpus luteum early on.
 - **hPL** (human placental lactogen) - regulates maternal metabolism.
 - **Estrogens & Progesterone** - essential for uterine quiescence and fetal growth.
- **NEW! - Human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) is a HERV!**
- In fact, the placenta is the only organ in humans that simultaneously acts as a respiratory, excretory, and immune, and endocrine organ.

Photos by Paul Van Hemel, September 2025

Suresh Mohla, PhD, an endocrinologist, provided an informative analysis of recent/current research on human endogenous retroviruses (HERVs), fall 2025.

January 16, 2026

Editor of the Week: Chitra Mohla

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Alerts & Notices

- Registration for winter term is under way and continuing through the term ending on February 13.
- The next issue of OLLI E-News will be published Friday, January 23; the regular deadline for submission of items is Tuesday, January 20, at 6:00.

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From the Desk of the Executive Director

Celebrating 20 Years of Service: Karen Nash, Finance Associate



By Lisa Mariam, Executive Director

This month, we proudly honor Karen Nash, our dedicated Finance Associate, for an incredible milestone—20 years of service to OLLI Mason.

Karen joined OLLI in January 2006 and quickly became an indispensable part of our team. Her meticulous attention to detail, unwavering integrity, and deep commitment to our mission have ensured that OLLI's financial operations run smoothly year after year. Behind the scenes, Karen has managed countless transactions, budgets, and reports with precision, always keeping our organization on solid footing.

Beyond her professional expertise, Karen is known for her kindness and collaborative spirit. She has supported staff, volunteers, and members alike with patience and care, embodying the values that make OLLI such a special community.

As we celebrate Karen's two decades of service, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for her loyalty, hard work, and the positive impact she has made on OLLI Mason. Her contributions have helped us grow and thrive, and we look forward to many more years of partnership.

Thank you, Karen, for 20 outstanding years!

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French Conversation and Happy Hour Club



By Doris Bloch, OLLI Member and Program Committee Co-Chair

This brand-new OLLI club held its first meeting on Friday, January 9, with 18 members online. This was an organizational meeting, and the goals were getting acquainted with the participants and ascertaining their level of proficiency in French, discovering their objectives in joining the group, and proposing some future topics for enjoyable conversations, e.g., listening to French songs/lyrics and discussing French wines.

The next club meeting will be held on January 23 at 4:00 on Zoom. If you are interested in receiving a meeting reminder or the various messages such as links to the French music, please contact Doris Bloch at dbloch50@hotmail.com. Better yet, sign up via the registration portal for the club. You may need to search for the listing online. Once registered, you will receive all the relevant and fun messages.

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OLLI Program Development for Non-US Countries and Cultures



By Shannon Kim Morrow, Lead Program Associate

Are you interested in other cultures and countries? You probably know that living in the DC area provides us with a wealth of opportunities for learning. Every country that the US has diplomatic relations with has its embassy in Washington, DC. We are looking for a volunteer to reach out to any of them for programming at OLLI.

If you're interested in leading this endeavor, please contact Shannon Kim Morrow at smorrow4@gmu.edu or program@gmu.edu. Thank you!

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Proposal to Form Hiking Club



By Kathy Rones, OLLI Member

I (Kathy Rones), a current member of OLLI George Mason, propose creating a hiking club as a way to gather with other OLLI members to enjoy hikes within 90 minutes of the Tallwood campus, for a distance of 5-7 miles. We could hike in local parks such as Shenandoah National Park, Manassas Battlefield trails, Cunningham Falls State Park, and others. The goal is to exercise and enjoy nature in a somewhat strenuous hike, with moderate elevation gain, to waterfalls, expansive views, or other features.

Club members (participants) would carpool to the location and, when possible, attempt to partner with groups

To establish this club, we will need to get at least 6 signatures on a petition. If you are interested in forming this club, please send an email to olliclub@gmu.edu. The next step is to have an in-person meeting at Tallwood later in January or February. I look forward to hearing from interested members and continuing the discussion to create our mission statement and identify potential hikes for this spring and summer.

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Photo of the Month



The January 2026 Photo of the Month theme was Open. We selected John Olsen's photo "Palouse," (of the well-known Palouse agricultural area in the northwestern US) which may also be viewed at [this page](#). To view other photos by members of the Photography Club, visit the club's photo [website](#).

-- By John Olsen and Lynne Cline, Photography Club Coordinators

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Poet's Corner

Courtesy of the Poetry Workshop

Neighborhood Book Club

We gather each month, third Thursday,
at the appointed time to talk about the book
we have chosen by a show of hands.
The person who suggested the title
will lead that discussion. It seems to work out.

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Others edge into stilted commentary,
as with George Orwell's *1984*. Or Hawthorne's
The Scarlet Letter.

We think of ourselves as an eclectic group
in background and in our views of the world,
but we manage to remain civil, as though we realize
that those we disagree with are still our neighbors
for the remainder of the month.

Fresh fruit and cheese help,
with a good merlot.

--Jan Bohall

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OLLI Ink Now Taking Submissions



By Margie Wildblood and Sophia Elberti, Co-Editors

It's that time again! **OLLI Ink 2026** is now accepting prose, poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and essays for our literary magazine.



We want to publish the *OLLI Ink* issue by the beginning of April for Poetry Month.

Now in its 16th year, *OLLI Ink* is a well-established publication whose contributors come from a wide spectrum of OLLI members, including, but not limited to those enrolled in writing, art, and photography classes.

How to Submit: Send your entries and/or questions to both co-editors. Submissions should be formatted in Word (preferred) or pdf. Make sure your name and contact information are included on your entry. Include a maximum 50-word biography in your email. **DEADLINE:** Monday, February 9, 11:59.

Margie Wildblood: mwildblood@gmail.com

Sophia Elberti: selberti@icloud.com

Guidelines:

POEMS – limit length to 30 lines

PROSE – limit length to 2,500 words single-spaced

Art/Photos: A separate call, with a different deadline, will follow later about how to submit these items.

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Arts & Music at George Mason

Performances January 16 through February 26

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By Shelly Gersten, OLLI E-News Staff Writer

The College of Visual and Performing Arts (CVPA) has several web sites of performances, talks etc. For tickets for either Center for the Arts Concert Hall (CFA) or Hylton Center, call 1-888-945-2468.

[CFA ticket purchase page](#)

[Center for the Arts YouTube channel](#)

[Hylton ticket purchase page](#)

The new <https://masonartsimplified.gmu.edu/>

music.calendar.gmu.edu/

theater.calendar.gmu.edu/

dance.calendar.gmu.edu

masonexhibitions.org/

If you miss a live performance, there is a pay-per-view for many: <https://cfa.gmu.edu/events/paid-digital-performances>

Dr. Linda Apple Monson produces a periodic "Notes from the Director." This email is full of information on interesting online performances by the students and faculty of the School of Music. If you would like to receive these bulletins, just sign up at [this link](#) to stay in touch. Also, the Center for the Arts has a website, [Mason Arts at Home](#), which has a calendar of online events and access to many past performances.

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At the Fairfax Campus Venues

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra

Fri, Jan 23, 8:00

A pre-performance discussion begins one hour prior to the performance.

Concert Hall

Admission: \$91, \$76, \$60.

Keyboard Conversations® with Jeffrey Siegel: Poetic Tone Pictures

Sun, Jan 25, 7:00

Concert Hall

Admission: \$60, \$52, \$38.

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Fairfax Campus Visual Arts

(details can be found at <https://www.masonexhibitions.org/>)

None currently at the Fairfax campus

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Mason Student and Faculty Performances

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Mason Bands Concert: *Dope*

Tue, Feb 24, 7:30
Concert Hall
Admission: \$19 Adult, \$14 Senior.

Mason Jazz Ensemble with Special Guest Vaughn Wiester

Thu, Feb 26, 8:00
Harris Theatre
Admission: \$19 Adult, \$14 Senior.

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At the Hylton Center (Manassas Campus)**Pied Piper Theatre - *Grease***

Fri, Jan 16, 7:00
Sat, Jan 17, 7:00
Sun, Jan 18, 2:00
Fri, Jan 23, 7:00
Sat, Jan 24, 7:00
Sun, Jan 25, 2:00
Gregory Family Theater
Admission: \$30 Adult, \$24 Senior.

***Dreams of Dance* Recital**

Sat, Jan 17, 1:30 and 5:00
Merchant Hall
Admission: \$32.

Aquila Theatre: *Hound of the Baskervilles*

Sun, Jan 25, 4:00
Merchant Hall
Admission: \$55, \$48, \$35.

**Visual Arts: OFFERINGS TO THE POTOMAC
ACKNOWLEDGING INDIGENOUS PLACE**

February 24 - May 15, 2026
Buchanan Hall Atrium Gallery, Manassas Campus

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For further details on any of the above events, see the [CFA Event Calendar](#) and the [Hylton Center event calendar](#).

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Please note: OLLI Meetings and Clubs may currently take place in several formats: some are in person only, some are online only, and some are hybrid, meaning that they take place in person and are accessible online simultaneously. OLLI events and activities meeting online bear the identification "Z" in their course or event number (except clubs; you may need to check the [OLLI calendar](#) and daily schedule email for location and other event information).

The following list covering the next two weeks is extracted for your convenience from the master online calendar maintained by the office. The list is accurate as of mid-week. *Note: All OLLI members are welcome at, and encouraged to attend, meetings of the Board of Directors, committees and resource groups, kick-off coffees, etc. The OLLI office has sent (or will send) emails with links and meeting passwords to club members.*

Sat Jan 17	10:30 am 1:00 pm	Tai Chi Club – online Personal Computer User Group
Mon Jan 19	9:30 am 4:00 pm	What's in the Daily News? – online Chair Yoga and More – online
Tue Jan 20	3:45 pm 4:30 pm	Caregivers Support Group – online Tai Chi Club – online
Wed Jan 21	1:30 pm 1:30 pm 1:30 pm 2:00 pm 4:00 pm	Board Game Club Bridge Club Dabbling Artists Club – online Memoir and More Writing Group – online Spanish Club – online
Thu Jan 22	3:00 pm 4:30 pm	Chair Yoga and More – online Tai Chi Club – online
Fri Jan 23	9:30 am 9:30 am 10:00 am 11:00 am 12:00 noon 2:00 pm 4:00 pm	Photography Club Crafts and Conversation Mah Jongg Club Homer, etc. – online Chair Yoga and More – online Classic Literature Club – online French Conversation and Happy Hour – online
Sat Jan 24	10:30 am	Tai Chi Club – online
Mon Jan 26	9:30 am 4:00 pm 4:00 pm	What's in the Daily News? – online Family History/Genealogy Club – online Chair Yoga and More – online
Tue Jan 27	4:00 pm 4:30 pm	Mah Jongg Club – online Tai Chi Club – online
Wed Jan 28	1:30 pm 1:30 pm 4:00 pm 4:00 pm	Board Game Club Bridge Club Spanish Page Turner Club – online Theater Lovers' Group – online
Thu Jan 29	3:00 pm 4:00 pm 4:30 pm	Chair Yoga and More – online Literary Fiction Book Club – online Tai Chi Club – online
Fri Jan 30	9:30 am 11:00 am 12:00 noon 2:00 pm	Crafts and Conversation Homer, etc. – online Chair Yoga and More – online Classic Literature Club – online
Sat Jan 31	10:30 am	Tai Chi Club – online

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About *OLLI E-News*

OLLI E-News was created by Rod Zumbro, who served as its editor from 2005 to 2013.

Editorial Staff

Chief Editor: Paul Van Hemel

Associate Editors: David Gundry, Deborah Kruesi

Weekly Editor Team: David Gundry, Chitra Mohla, John Nash, Paul Van Hemel

Proofreaders: Rebecca Jann, Susan Van Hemel, Thomas Appich, Martha Kossoff, Anne Hartshorn, Bonnie Becker, Carol McManus

Submissions: Members are encouraged to submit letters to the editor, letters to Ms. Ollie Ettakit (on etiquette matters), OLLI-related news items, articles, and photos. Submit material to: ollienewseditor@gmail.com.

Deadline: Tuesday, 6:00, for that week's issue (Monday, 6:00, for letters to the editor); early submissions are greatly appreciated. Please limit articles to about 250 words.

Note: You can view past issues of *OLLI E-News* on the DocStore. To search the content of issues, use Search Our Site or put your search term in Google followed by "site:olli.gmu.edu/" without the quotes.

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