



empowering women since 1881

Ithaca Insights

October 2023

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Ithaca Insights is the monthly publication of the Ithaca, New York, Branch of AAUW

AAUW Mission

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) advances gender equity for women and girls through research, education, and advocacy.

In principle and practice, AAUW values and seeks a diverse membership. There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization based on age, ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, geographical location, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or socioeconomic status.

Monday, October 16 • 4:30 – 6:00 p.m.

Open Doors English

In-person Social and Program at Lifelong

Join fellow AAUW members and guests in person at Lifelong, 114 Court Street, Ithaca, on Monday afternoon, October 16. We will learn about Open Doors English, a nonprofit English-as-a-second-language school for adults. Come at 4:30 for an informal gathering with cider and donuts. The program is from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m.

Open Doors English (ODE) serves adult students in Tompkins County and beyond. ODE's mission is to "offer English classes so that adults can participate fully in community life, advocate and care for themselves and their families, and pursue their goals." The student body is comprised of immigrants, refugees, asylum-seekers, farm workers, and temporary residents. All students are welcome. ODE has served 200-300 students per year since opening in 2019.



Building relationships is transformative

This presentation by Liz Susmann is an opportunity to learn about ODE, ask questions, and meet some students. She explains, "You will learn that while our work is centered on providing English instruction, our program is ultimately about relationships. The strength of connections fostered at ODE is magical and transformative. We look forward to seeing you!"

Liz Susmann is one of two co-directors for Open Doors English, and is one of the founding members of the organization. She has been working in adult ESL since 2012 and has enjoyed teaching students at every proficiency level over the years. Liz is also a native Ithacan and always appreciates making new connections in the community.

Yes, there is parking

There are free parking lots in front of Lifelong, 114 Court Street, and two rows behind Lifelong. Access the front parking from Court St. Access the parking lot behind Lifelong from Buffalo St. The driveway is next to Padma Center for Natural Therapies, 114 W. Buffalo St. Street parking with meters is available on Court St., Cayuga St. and Buffalo St.

Lifelong is Ithaca's Senior Center. Pick up information about its programs and activities when you join us on the 16th.

President's Message

Great Start to AAUW Year

As I write this, the weather is gorgeous and the sunshine is highlighting our beautiful fall colors. Days like today are one of the gems about living in Upstate NY and enjoying outdoors in our local communities.

The branch board met earlier this month and focused on improving the branch for all members. Your involvement at any level is greatly appreciated from renewing your membership to participating in our programs and interest groups to volunteering for a branch activity to donating to AAUW Funds.

In September, Bobbie Kohut and Carolyn McPherson coordinated an interesting and informal program with our three newest members, Patti Carey, Aidan Kelly, and Jessica Scott, over Zoom. We had a great discussion and we got to know each better.

Learning English and Our Community

On Monday, October 16th, we will be hosting an in-person social gathering and program on Open Doors English. This innovative non-profit helps non-English speakers both learn our language and how to navigate in their new community. We are meeting at Lifelong, Ithaca's senior center, located downtown at 114 Court Street. (More details on P. 1) I hope you will be able to attend this program.

New York Public Policy Focus

NYS-AAUW has a new Public Policy Vice President, Sandy Camillo (publicpolicy@aauw-nys.org). Sandy has extensive experience in AAUW Leadership Roles and she is working hard to make Public Policy Initiatives a key activity for all NYS-AAUW Members.

NYS-AAUW Public Policy Focus Issues

1. Protection from Censorship-Book Banning: Two NYS School Districts have already banned books. Book banning can happen both in schools and in our public libraries, so we need to advocate to prevent censorship. Please plan to attend our December 9th Open Books Open Minds NYS-AAUW Regional Meeting. This program at the Tompkins County Public Library is a public panel discussion on Book Banning. Learn more about what is going on both locally and across the country.

2. ERA New York Initiative: On January 24, 2023, the NY Legislature passed the ERA-NY (Equal Rights Amendment). New Yorkers will vote on the ratification of this amendment on the 2024 election ballot. Until the ratification, the only form of discrimination prohibited is related to a person's race and/or religion.

This amendment prohibits discrimination by the government based on a person's ethnicity, national origin, age, disability and sex. Although this amendment's passage won't affect the Federal ERA Amendment, it will make a difference in the lives of NYS Women.

3. ERA Federal: NYS Senators Kristin Gillibrand and Chuck Schumer point out that the time deadline for the Equal Rights Amendment was set in the preamble rather than the body of the proposed ERA Amendment. Legally, only what is contained in the body of the amendment is binding and therefore the time limit has no bearing on the passage of the amendment.

The ERA is an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that enshrines gender equality as a constitutional right. Its main clause states: *"Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."* This amendment is crucial to eliminating discrimination on the basis of sex across our country – and its finalization in the U.S. Constitution will usher in new and necessary protections for all people across our country, including women who are being denied full reproductive care options.

4. CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women): CEDAW is the international treaty against discrimination against women that has not been ratified by the US. Even China has ratified the treaty, but US treaties require US Presidential support and a 2/3 vote of the US Senate.

5. Human Trafficking: NY ranks as the 4th highest state for reports of sexual exploitation. Awareness of this abuse of women and girls needs to be addressed in NY.

6. Social Security: The US borrowed \$2.9 trillion dollars from the Social Security Fund, and the US pays \$65 billion yearly interest to the Social Security Fund, but has not paid back the principal, known as "Borrowing from Peter to Pay Paul." The Fund's reserves will run out by 2033 and will not be able to fulfill its obligations to retirees if actions are not taken to address the shortfall.

The majority of women have earned less than men throughout their lifetimes because of the gender pay
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Public Policy Issues, continued from p. 2

gap. Since Social Security is based on your lifetime earnings, women are most affected by this threat to their Social Security benefits. The proposed solutions to fix this crisis and to provide the benefits as they were originally promised looks bleak. The solutions being considered are:

- a. Raise Social Security's combined employer and employee payroll tax from 12.4% to 15.76% of the employee's pay.
- b. Permanently cut promised benefits by 21-22% for all Social Security recipients in 2034. This action is what politicians have promised to Americans under current law.
- c. Permanently cut benefits by 25% for those who start to collect Social Security in 2021 and after.
- d. Some combination of the three approaches described above.

What You Can Do

As an AAUW member, please consider being an advocate for women's rights. Contact our representatives to let them know your opinions/positions on these critical issues. Please do not assume that others will take the lead to stand-up for our rights. Currently, the branch does not have a Public Policy Chair. If you would like to consider serving in this role, please contact me or Lin.

Wishing your health and happiness,
Kim Edgar, Co-President
Kimberlysedgar@gmail.com

Dates to Remember

Monday, Oct. 9 * 7:00 p.m. Book Group, *The Rules of Civility*, via Zoom

Monday, Oct. 16 • 4:30 p.m. Open Doors English at Lifelong

Monday, Nov. 13 • 7:00 p.m. Book Group, *Chemistry Lessons*, via Zoom

Monday, Nov. 20 • 7:00 p.m. Guidance Counselor 101, via Zoom

Saturday, Dec. 9 • 10:00 a.m. Open Books Open Minds Tompkins County Public Library, see p. 4

Monday, Dec. 11 • 7:00 p.m. Book Group, *Prairie Fires: The American Dream of Laura Ingalls Wilder*, via Zoom

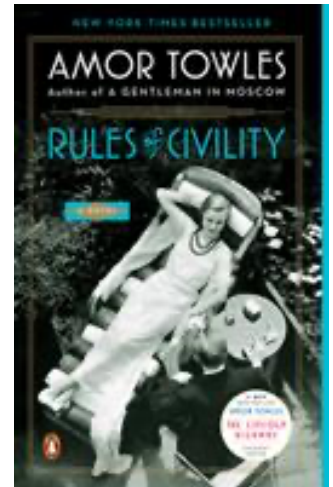
Book Group

What Are the Rules of Civility?

If you have ever spent time in New York City, even the occasional weekend, you will find much to enjoy in *Rules of Civility* by Amor Towles. The Book Group will be discussing this historical novel, much of it set in the 1930s, this Monday evening, October 9.

We will meet, via Zoom, at 7:00 p.m. for tea (yours) and conversation. Kathy Earnest-Koons will lead our discussion beginning at 7:30 p.m.

Author Amor Towles is better known for *A Gentleman in Moscow*, one of the Book Group's favorite books. *Rules of Civility* is Towles' first novel. The title is taken from advice to himself written by a young George Washington. Are there overtones of Jay Gatsby here? 1930s screwball comedies? Reviewers have suggested both, but agree that the author knows his city.



On November 13 we will be discussing *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus. All members and guests are welcome to join us. If you are not on the Book Group e-list, contact Lin.

AAUW at the Book Sale

The Friends of the Tompkins County Public Library Book Sale begins this Saturday, Oct. 7. The Book Group invites you to join us in working at the Book Sale on the last Saturday morning, Oct. 21. Contact Jeanette if you can come. For more information and all book sale dates, see booksale.org

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& Jeanette Knapp (jdk454@gmail.com)
Book Group Co-Chairs

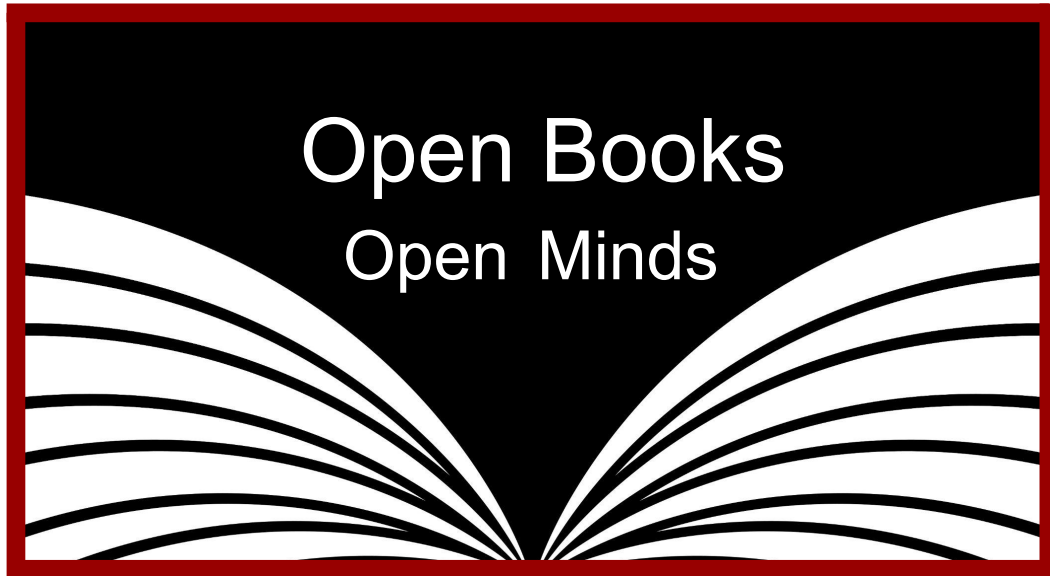
Website: ithaca-ny.aauw.net

Facebook page: [AAUW Ithaca Branch](https://www.facebook.com/AAUW-Ithaca-Branch)

Instagram: Aidan Kelly has created a new branch Instagram account: [@aauw.ithaca](https://www.instagram.com/aauw.ithaca)

If you have photos or advertisements for events you want to share, you can email them to Aidan at aidankelly@cornell.edu.

A Public Panel on Book Banning



December 9, 2023 ←
10 am to 12 pm

*Tompkins County Public Library
101 East Green Street, Ithaca, NY 14850*

**“Banning books is just another form of bullying.
It’s all about fear and an assumption of power.
The key is to address the fear and deny the power.”**

**James Howe, Oneida, NY author of the renowned Bannicula series,
winner of more than ten Children’s Choice awards.**

For more information contact Kim Edgar, kimberlysedgar@gmail.com

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