

U3A Christchurch Central

'University of the Third Age'

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Newsletter 5, 28 July – 25 August 2026

Course 5 – Political Challenges

Course Organiser: Jan Bierman



28 July, Professor Robert G. Patman, Politics Programme, University of Otago

Punching Below its Weight: New Zealand and Trump's Iran War

Confronted with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on 28 February, the National-led coalition responded with a continuation of a 'softly-softly' approach that has characterised New Zealand's approach to the second Trump administration. This saddled New Zealand with an ambiguous policy towards a conflict in Iran that predictably had significant global political and economic repercussions.



4 August, Shamubeel Eaquad, Chief Economist at Simplicity

Finding Common Ground

New Zealand is changing fast and our social cohesion is fraying. These two forces, when they collide, will make it impossible to make the changes that will make future generations prosperous. What can be done?



11 August, Dr Thérèse Arseneau, Adjunct Senior Fellow in Political Science, University of Canterbury

Election 2026: Trends and Challenges

This year's general election, the eleventh under MMP, is shaping up to be close and unpredictable. This talk explores how MMP works in practice and how it has influenced past election outcomes and the governments formed.

Using insights from recent elections this presentation looks at what current polling might signal, the challenges and complexities of 'winning' in an MMP system, and what to watch for as we approach the 2026 election.

	18 August, Dr Graeme Smart, Principal Scientist for Natural Hazards and Hydrodynamics, Earth Sciences NZ/Consultant Achieving resilience for and against extreme weather events What defines extreme weather? What produces resilience? And why does our ability to withstand severe weather diminish with each new extreme event? In an illustrated presentation we show the situation in a global context, we discuss how appreciating the problem is part of the solution, and how government, science and community must all play a role in building a more resilient future.
	25 August, Dr Rosemary Banks, Victoria University of Wellington, former NZ Ambassador Navigating New Zealand's way in a changed and changing world Changes in New Zealand's geostrategic environment are accelerating as a new global power balance is being contested. We are challenged as a country and as a society to understand and adapt to this new context, Distance is no longer a protection from threats to our values and our way of life.

Hospitality:

Thanks to Yvonne Ekdahl for coordinating morning tea/coffee/biscuits and to John Reilly, Donna Aitkin and Kate Livingston for their assistance.

Visitors are welcome: \$5 per session in cash. Visitors must sign the register at the membership desk.

Cell phone use during presentations: Members are reminded that, while they may use their cell phones to take notes during presentations, they should not take photos of the presenter or any of the slides presented as the distribution of this material requires the consent of presenters. All phones set to silent.

Interest groups:

U3A Christchurch Central has two interest groups - the **Walking Group** and the **Art Interest Group**. For the Walking group contact Sue Allard sue.allard@xtra.co.nz, and for the Art Interest Group contact Anne McMurtrie, annemcmurtrie@xtra.co.nz, 027 537 5128.

U3A Art Group: We will visit the PG Gallery, 192 Bealey Avenue at 10:30 am on Friday July 24 to see Euan McLeod's exhibition "Fool on the Hill". Macleod focuses mainly on landscapes and the human presence within them. His dense, textured and sculptural use of paint has become a consistent feature of his work. Contact Anne McMurtrie by text or email if you would like to join the group visit.

Course Dates 2026

Course 6: 8 September – 29 September, **Innovative Companies (ChCh)**

Course 7: 20 October – 17 November, **Potpourri**

Final session: 24 November