

Power Players: Couples That Changed the World

In-person series

Tuesdays, 13 October to 17 November 2026

Presented by Dr. Laura Carlson

13 October 2026: From Monarchs to Prime Ministers – Political Partnerships

We start our series with a dive into the famous couples who forged empires, united continents or created centuries-long dynasties. We'll span the centuries, exploring the both powerful and tragic partnership of Cleopatra and Mark Antony, the romantic royal marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and the presidential powerhouse of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt.

20 October 2026: Fighting the Good Fight Together – Revolutionary Partnerships

This week, we explore couples who stood together during revolution and political upheaval. We'll investigate the Cultural Revolution through the lens of China's ultimate power couple, Mao Zedong and Jiang Qing. We'll also explore couples who supported each other in fights against injustice, from Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King's struggle for civil rights in the United States, to Nelson and Winnie Mandela's battle against South Africa's apartheid.

27 October 2026: Innovation and Industry – Scientific Partnerships

This week, we explore famous duos who matched intellectual wits in the fields of physics, chemistry, anthropology and more. Discover the powerful partnership of Voltaire and Émilie du Châtelet, who together advanced Newtonian physics. Or the Nobel Prize-winning family of Marie and Pierre Curie, whose discovery of radium had wide-ranging influences on science, technology and even warfare. We'll unpack how these duos relied on each other for both their professional careers and personal lives, and how – or when – those areas came into conflict.

3 November 2026: Living the Creative Life – Artistic Partnerships

We'll discover what life is like living with not just one artist in the house, but two. With partners acting alternatively as inspirational muse or artistic rival, artistic duos have given the world some of its most enduring and beloved

works. We'll explore some of the art world's most famous duos, such as the tumultuous marriages of Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera or Jackson Pollock and Lee Krasner. We'll also delve into some less-famous duos, including the contentious relationship between celebrated sculptor Auguste Rodin and his student, lover and eventual rival Camille Claudel.

10 November 2026: Music and Lyrics – Couples of Song and Verse

From the lifelong collaboration of composers Clara and Robert Schumann to the transformative marriage of musicians June Carter and Johnny Cash, this week we explore the inner workings of musical pairings. We'll investigate the collaborative if contentious process of writing (and performing) music together. Discover couples who spent their lives immersed in music, from Romantic études and operatic arias to rockabilly country.

17 November 2026: Stars of the Silver Screen – Cinematic Couples

We will close this series by looking at some of the most public and famous cinematic couples over the last century. We'll go beyond the tabloids to explore how these partnerships helped to create the Hollywood of today, from the early years of movie-making with Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford to the film activism of Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee and, of course, that most iconic of Hollywood power couples, Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton.